UT PICTURA POESIS: KEATS, ANAMORPHOSIS, AND TAOISM

by

RICHARD W. LI

Diploma, Hunan Normal University, 1975
M.A., The University of Victoria, 1987
M.A., The University of Rochester, 1989

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of English)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
May 1995
© Richard W. Li, 1995
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced
degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it
freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive
copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my
department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or
publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written
permission.

(Signature)

Department of ___________ English___________

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date _________ May 1995 ____________
Abstract

The present dissertation proposes a fresh approach to Keats's remarkable growth and development as a poet by assessing his works in relation to four different but interrelated contexts: the tradition of poetry as a "speaking picture," Lacanian interpretations of that tradition, the related nature of classical Chinese poetry, and parallels between Keatsian themes and Taoist principles.

Chapter one seeks to assess Keats's poetry by articulating the relationship between "ut pictura poesis" on the one hand, and psychoanalysis and Taoist philosophy on the other. Chapter two deals with the invisible ground of the sympathetic imagination. Chapter three discusses Keats's philosophy of "negative capability" with reference to the Taoist philosophy of the "Middle Path."

Chapter four compares Keats's Lamia to the Chinese legend The White Snake. Chapter five concludes the work by showing how the poet matures into "poethood" through an anamorphotic process of developing from the imaginary to the symbolic.

The focus of this dissertation is on the pictorial and sculptural qualities of Keats's poetry in comparison with many poems in the Chinese and western traditions. Efforts have also been made to combine psychoanalytical theory and Taoist philosophy and poetics to shed light on the discussion. Even though the dissertation seeks to assess Keats's poetry through an analogy with
the plastic arts and to extend this assessment through conceptual categories provided by psychoanalysis (with reference to the poet's maturing into "poethood") and Taoist philosophy (with reference to the poet's philosophy of "negative capability"), it does not assert that Keats is a psychoanalyst nor does it claim that he is a Taoist. Keats is mainly a poet dealing with human emotion, love, beauty, truth, and imagination -- a poet with "no self," a poet who can be regarded as "the perfect man" (Tao Te Ching, 18) in the truest sense of a Taoist.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Table of Contents iv

Dedication v

Chapter One Introduction: The Gaze, Keats’s Poetry, and Tao 1

Chapter Two Invisible Ground of Sympathetic Imagination 67

Chapter Three Negative Capability and the Middle Path 129

Chapter Four The Male Gaze: *Lamia* and *The White Snake* 179

Chapter Five Conclusion: The Paradox of Poetic Identity 234

Works Cited 257

Bibliography 265

Appendix 1 275

Appendix 2 276
For
MY MOTHER,
MY FATHER,
NANCY TIAN,
AND PHILIP LI
INTRODUCTION

The Gaze, Keats's Poetry, and Tao

Poetry is like painting. One work will please you more if you stand close to it; the other strikes more if you stand farther away. One shows more to advantage when seen in the shadow; another, unafraid of the sharp view of the critic, ought to be viewed in the light. One will please only once; the other, though looked at ten times, will continue to please.

Horace
To write poetry like painting is a typical characteristic of John Keats. His poems, if not all of them, tend towards pictures and sculptures through his reproduction of visual arts in language and in the stationing of images. The resulting verse is highly imaginative, visual, and polysensory. His poems can be viewed as well as read. His ability to unite poetry with painting is well summarized by Hirst in his introduction to John Keats. He says, "...perhaps the most characteristic Keatsian device is one that fuses poetry with painting and sculpture: the suspension of movement at a pregnant moment" (Hirst, 29).

Keats's gift of fusing poetry with painting and sculpture in language is remarkably demonstrated in many of his poems. As a matter of fact, his "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" were first published in a periodical called Annals of the Fine Arts, the "first quarterly ever devoted to the visual arts in England" (Jack, XVii). At the end of "Sleep and Poetry," Keats tells us that pictures, statuary, and printed reproductions of them inspire his poetry. In describing the scene in the story of Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne,¹ Keats gives us a vivid picture of Ariadne's "Blushing" cheek under the intense gaze of the God:

---And the swift bound
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye
Made Ariadne’s cheek look blushingly.

(Keats, "Sleep and Poetry," 45-46)

This picture of Bacchus and Ariadne is exactly what Hirst calls the scene in which "the suspension of the movement at a pregnant moment" takes place. The arrested movement of the narrative causes the dynamic poise of the reader or viewer to look closely at the "blushing" cheek of Ariadne at this "pregnant moment." At the friendly invitation of the poet, the viewer will find in this picture something unusual compared to a real painting: there is a movement of looking and a being-looked-at, or a movement of looking and looking-back, creating a sense of visual reality. Through this interchange of looks between Bacchus and Ariadne, the poet as a mediator is annihilated. The reader is thus in direct contact with the scene. Therefore, through the interfusion of subjectivity between the poet and the subject he describes, the reader is able to experience poetic reality through the eyes of the poem's characters, Bacchus and Ariadne. Furthermore, through this device of suspending the "movement at a pregnant moment," the reader can even sense the dynamic force that is moving the narrative and giving life and blood to the picture. This effect is hard to achieve with a painting or sculpture, for the scene presented in a picture is silent and static. But in Keats's poetry, Bacchus and Ariadne come alive. We can see Bacchus in mid-air gazing at Ariadne
while she glances at him sideways with her "cheek blushingly" red.

One of Keats's most famous picture-like poems is his "Ode to a Nightingale." The abnormally concrete imagery in the poem, "A beaker full of the warm south," shocked Byron so much that even he, according to Leigh Hunt, "could not understand" (qtd. in Perkins, 1120) the meaning of it. In the second stanza of the poem, the poet yearns for a sweet dissolution into the life of the nightingale:

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim ...  

(Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," 280)

Here the personification of "the blushful Hippocrene" reinforces the sensations aroused by wine. Through the life of the senses, the poet seems to move into the higher realm of the immortals, the home of the nightingale. Now he can sing as the immortal bird with "full-throated" ease and write poetry like the never-dying muses
just by looking at the "beaker full of the warm South,/Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene." This process of identifying oneself sympathetically with the subject described or imagined is what Keats calls the process of "annulling self" (Keats, *Letters*, I, 323) by living in the subject described and, therefore, bringing out its poetic nature:

... the camelion Poet ... is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity -- he is continually in for -- and filling some other Body -- The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute -- the poet has none; no identity ....

(Keats, *Letters*, I, 386-87)

The Keatsian chameleon poet has no identity because he changes his identity with the subject he imagines or describes. This sympathetic identification is even more remarkable in the first stanza of "The Eve of St. Agnes." Here the poet totally forgets his own identity by "filling some other Body" (Keats, *Letters*, I, 387):

St. Agnes' Eve -- Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

(Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes," 229)

The concrete images of the limping, trembling hare and Beadsman
with numb fingers and "frosted breath" give the reader a real sense
of chilly contact with them. The reader can almost feel it as the
poet experiences the cold reality of the scene. In the second
stanza of the poem, by entering into the freezing "sculptur'd dead
.../Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails," the poet reaches a
state of non-differentiation between himself and the objects he
describes. It is in this state of non-being, imaginative sympathy
that the poet "can conceive of a billiard ball that it may have a
sense of delight from its own roundness, smoothness ...." (Keats,
Letters, I, 389). And also it is through this interfusion between
subject and object that the poet can transfuse life and blood into
the Grecian urn.

Ut Pictura Poesis

"Ut pictura poesis," "as is painting so is poetry" -- the tag
itself comes from Horace, but the topos goes back to Plato, and is
one of the commonplaces running through the history of aesthetics up to the present. In his *Epistle to the Pisos*, Horace wrote:

> Poetry is like painting. One work will please you more if you stand close to it; the other strikes more if you stand farther away. One shows more to advantage when seen in the shadow; another, unafraid of the sharp view of the critic, ought to be viewed in the light. One will please only once; the other, though looked at ten times, will continue to please.

(Horace, 73)

In general, the meaning of the formulation could be summarized as follows: poetry, like painting and other arts, evokes sensuous presentations. But unlike them, it does so by means of spoken and written language. The medium of poetic presentations is by definition visual, acoustical, and polysensory while that of the visual arts is sensory, silent, and static.

The history of aesthetics shows what has been said about the unity of poetry and painting. The best example is the poet Simonides of Ceos (six century B.C.). His best statement was quoted by Plutarch in *De Gloria Atheniensium*: "Painting is mute poetry and poetry is a speaking picture" (qtd. in Markiewicz, 535). In *The Republic*, Plato compares the poet to the painter: "The poet is like a painter who, as we have already observed, will make a likeness of a cobbler though he understands nothing of cobbling; and his
picture is good enough for those who know no more than he does, and judge only by colour and figures" (Plato, 34). For Plato, the poet paints his pictures with "words and phrases" and plays "on the colours of the several arts" (Ibid). In Poetics, Aristotle also compares the poet and painter and poetry with painting. He says: "The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate .... The vehicle of expression is language -- either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors. There are ... languages which we concede to the poets" (Aristotle, 64). The issue of the unity of poetry and painting is discussed in details in On the Sublime by Longinus. He says:

Furthermore ... dignity, grandeur, and powers of persuasion are to a very large degree derived from images -- for that is what some people call the representation of mental pictures. In a general way the term 'image' is used of any mental conception, from whatever source it presents itself, which gives rise to speech; but in current usage the word is applied to passages in which, carried away by your feelings, you imagine you are actually seeing the subject of your description, and enable your audience as well to see it.

(Longinus, 121)

Longinus describes poetry as "the representation of mental pictures." He emphasizes the importance of the visual quality of
the poem. Through the "image" in the poem the reader is able to see the "description" as the poet. Then the author makes the distinction between the poetic images and the rhetorical ones. For Longinus, poetic images are to "enthrall" (ekpledzis) while rhetoric ones aim at pictorial vividness (enargeia). In this case, we can find "vivid" images in poetry as in painting.

Typical examples of poetry as "the representation of mental pictures" can be found both in Keats's poetry as well as in some of the traditional Chinese poets. In "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," Keats presents a "mental picture" of himself "Like a sick eagle looking at the sky" and those marble "wonders" as a paradox "That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude /Wasting of old time ..." (Keats, 58). The poet here is doubly conscious of his mortality and that of the arts. The Elgin marbles, like the "sick eagle," are subject to time. So is the poet. That is why the poet is so sad at the beginning of the poem, for he is conscious of his own mortality. He feels even sadder when he looks at himself through the images of the "sick eagle" and the Elgin marbles, for neither is conscious of its own mortality. But the poet's intention is not to create despair in the poem but to present a picture of ourselves through the images of "a sick eagle" and the Elgin marbles so that we can look at ourselves and achieve our own self-consciousness. Therefore, by realizing our own mortality, we achieve a sense of immortality. As Keats indicates at the end of the poem, the "sun" is but "a shadow of a magnitude"; it is mortality that makes our life immortally meaningful. For the poet, the Elgin marbles, the
mental representation of representations, are like poems, but they are not poems because, as statues and friezes, they are subject to the "Wasting of old time." On the contrary, poetry is not subject to time; it is immortal. The poet immortalizes the Elgin Marbles by fusing poetry with them through his sympathetic imagination, thus mingling the "Grecian grandeur" with immortality.

To say simply that poetry is like painting or painting is like poetry is not enough. Poetry is an ontological experience through images. It is both aesthetic and psychological. It involves not only perception but also sensation and cognition.

In a famous Chinese poem by Ma Chih-yuan [Ma Zhiyuan] (ca. 1260 - ca. 1341), the ontological experience of the poet is best presented by means of a "mental picture" with the most concrete images in the poem:

Dried vines, and old tree, evening crows;
A small bridge, flowing water, men's homes;
An ancient road, west wind, a lean horse;
Sun slants west:
A heart-torn man at sky's end [my emphasis].

(qtd. in Yip, 18)

This poem involves a process of perception to sensation and cognition. Through its concrete images of "dried vines," "old tree," "evening crows," "small bridge," "flowing water," "men's homes," "ancient road," "west wind," "lean horse," "sun slant[ing]..."
west," and "heart-torn man at sky's end," the poet creates a vivid picture as in a movie. With the successive shots of these concrete things in the landscape, the sensation of the viewer is gradually built up, and at the end of the poem, the image of "A heart-torn man at sky's end" produces a shock of self-consciousness, a cognition for the reader/viewer. Like Wordsworth's "blind beggar" in London in *The Prelude*, the "heart-torn man" tells "The story of the Man, and who he was" (Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, vii, 609-615) through images rather than words. As Yip says, "this poem operates pictorially rather than semantically. The successive shots do not constitute a linear development (such as how this leads to that). Rather, the objects coexist, as in painting, and yet the mobile point of view has made it possible to temporalize the spatial units." (Yip, 18). To put it in another way, this poem reads like a picture. By putting the reader/viewer into the picture, the reader/viewer can experience what the poet has experienced and see what the poet has seen.

Like the Grecian Marbles, the formula "ut pictura poesis" is also subject to time and change. In the course of history, it was often interpreted and repeated. In antiquity, Dion of Prusa points out the difference between poetry and painting by saying that "a poem develops in time, while a painting remains the same through time, that a poem can 'evoke images of anything that comes to mind,' while a painting represents only the human image. A poem can also depict that which cannot be visually depicted, such as, for example, thoughts. A painting can attempt this only through the use
of symbols" (qtd. in Markiewicz, 536). From the Middle Ages to the middle of the eighteenth century, critics seem to agree on the identification of poetry and painting. This could be found in Julius Caesar Scaliger’s *Poetics* and Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesie* as well as in Alexander Pope’s Letter VIII to Charles Jervos (in which he uses the term "sister arts"). The most typical example of the unity of poetry and painting was to be found in Charles Alfonse Du Fresnoy’s Latin poem "De arte graphica," which was translated by Dryden in 1695 and by Defoe in 1720. Du Fresnoy wrote:

> ut pictura poesis erit; similisque poesi
> Sit pictura: refert per aemula quaque sororem,
> Alternantque vices et nomina; muta Poesis
> Dicittur haec, Pictura loquens soleat illa vocari.

(qtd. in Markiewicz, 537)

[Let poetry be like painting; and let painting resemble poetry; let them compete with each other and exchange their tasks and names; one is called mute poetry, the other shall be known as speaking painting.]

From the endless discussions on the identification of poetry and painting, there develops a conviction about the superiority of poetry over painting because of its image-creating capacity and value. In *The Spectator*, Joseph Addison claims that a poetic
description gives a truer idea of objects than does a picture, for images which flow from objects themselves "appear weak and faint in comparison of those that come from the expressions" (Addison, 416). Denis Diderot, in his "Lettre sur les sourds et muets," spoke in favour of "emblematic" poetry, one which uses hieroglyphs and "depicts" (Markiewicz, 539) the thought contained in them. In the famous treatise Laokoon or the Limits of Painting and Poetry, Gotthold Efraim Lessing tries to formulate the fundamental difference between sculpture and painting and poetry. According to his view, sculpture and painting have no temporal dimension whereas poetry can present action in time: sculpture and painting "can imitate actions, but only by way of indication, and through the means of bodies" (Lessing, 320). Poetry can paint bodies, "but only by way of indiction, and through the means of actions" (Ibid.) Even though he feels uncomfortable about the term "poetic painting," still he stresses repeatedly that the poet's aim is "to make the ideas which he awakens in us so vivid that we believe ourselves to be receiving sensory impressions of objects and forget, in the moment of illusion, that they are the result of the poet's words .... A poet should always be painting, and now we want to see to what extent bodies composed of adjacent parts are suitable for such painting" (Ibid.).

In the Romantic period, extending the classical theory of mimesis, the romantics believed in an expressive conception of poetry; therefore, poetry was removed further from painting and brought closer to music. "Yet since poetry," Markiewicz writes,
"was also treated as capable of creating or unveiling transcendental truths, the subject of its image-making quality re-emerged" (Markiewicz, 541). Coleridge, in his Biographia Literaria (1817), praised Shakespeare’s "Venus and Adonis" for "the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable," for the fact that "with more than the power of the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness" (Coleridge, Ch. XV).

During the same period, theoreticians and philosophers also stressed that poetry occupied the highest position within the system of all arts. Friedrich Schlegel called poetry "the art of arts" and "the most general of arts" (Shlegel, 102). George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel asserted that poetry is a totality. It combines the visual arts and music in a higher realm. Even though he agrees with Lessing that, unlike painting, "poetry is incapable of the determination characteristic of sensory presentations," Markiewicz adds that Hegel "believes that mental perception (Anschauung) is capable of overcoming the successive appearance and isolation of individual details and of ‘focusing the motley sequence into a single image, of fixing it in the imagination and delighting in it’" (Markiewicz, 542). Furthermore, poetic expression shows us objects in their immediacy, or rather "clears away the abstract understanding and replaces it with real determination" (Ibid.). In his The Philosophy of Fine Arts, Hegel talks about art in detail. He insists that art must not be used "as a mere pastime in the service of pleasure and entertainment" (Hegel, 533) or in terms of
any other ulterior purpose; instead, it must be considered a mode through which the idea is made available to the consciousness. Art presents its matters in sensuous forms. The beautiful in art is the idea embodied in concrete form. According to Hegel, there are three kinds of art — symbolic, classical, and romantic. "Symbolic" art is similar to what the Romantics call allegory, an art in which objects represented have arbitrary meaning. In "classical" art, form and content are united. "Romantic" art transcends itself and makes the "inward life of reason ... the medium and determinate existence of its content" (Hegel, 534). Hegel associates symbolic art with architecture, classical art with sculpture, and romantic art with painting, music, and poetry. For these three kinds of art, in their relationship to matter, mass, and spatialization, the farther away they are from them, the more ideal the art form is. Among all these three, "the romantic art type is supreme in the products of painting and music, and likewise in poetical composition, as their preeminent and unconditionally adequate mode of expression" (Hegel, 545). And among painting, music, and poetry, poetry is the most ideal and most free because its sensuousness is a mere creation of the mind. Hegel says:

Poetry is, however, conformable to all types of the beautiful, and its embrace reaches them all for the reason that the poetic imagination is its own proper medium, and imagination is essential to every creation of beauty,
Hegel's view is different from the mimetic theory of the ancients. For Hegel, the language of poetry is capable of creating its own "concrete universals," its own totality without being limited by the objects it evokes. Like a painter, the poet paints with words.

Hegel's views on the image-making capacity of the poet greatly influenced the aesthetics of the nineteenth century. They were repeated and paraphrased. Friedrick Theodor Vischer wrote: "A poet has at his disposal a variety of approaches taken from the visual arts and he uses them alternately. He forces us to look sometimes with the measuring eye, at times with the touching eye, and still at others with the painter's eye. One who does not offer anything to the inner eye, who cannot paint for it, is not a poet" (Vischer, 1172). To Vischer, poetry is an art of creating mental images with words as a vehicle. For Edward von Hartmann, "The art of poetic shaping of language consists of choices and combinations of words which serve the greatest perceptibility (Anschaulichkeit) of the verbal meaning of sentences and their combinations" (Hartmann, 717). At the end of the nineteenth century, in answer to Marinetti's questionnaire on free verse, Emil Verhaeren wrote: "To the poet any thought, even the most abstract idea, appears in the shape of an image. The rhythm is only the gesture, step or tempo (allure) of this image. Words transmit its colour, fragrance,
sound, and rhythm -- its dynamic or static qualities" (Verhaeren, 88).

All the above quotations show clearly that nineteenth-century aestheticians strongly believed in the image-making capacity of poetry. In the twentieth century, aestheticians and literary theorists have continued their interest in the concept of "poetic visualization." In the programmatic statement of New Criticism, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Poetry* (1938), we read under the entry "Image, imagery": "The representation in poetry of any sense experience is called imagery. Imagery does not consist merely of 'mental pictures,' but may make an appeal to any of the senses; this is another way of saying that poetry is concrete" (Brooks and Warren, 555). C. S. Lewis states in his *The Poetic Image* that "it is a more or less sensory picture with words" (Lewis, 22).

The Marxist theoreticians regard the "image-making" quality of literature as one of the central issues of literary studies. Literature is supposed to reflect the reality of class struggle; therefore, the "representational" quality is a chief requisite. Lukacs says in *Die Probleme des Realismus*, "The task of art is to reconstruct the concrete in a directly sensuous obviousness" (Lukacs, 25). For the Marxists, literature is a tool for the realization or concretization of the internal states of the class consciousness of the individuals by means of the "image."

The term *image* appears to be the key in many poetic manifestos in the twentieth century. One of the most famous statements is made
by T. S. Eliot in his "Dante" in Selected Essays. He admired Dante’s allegories as "clear visual images" (Eliot, 204) which "make us more definitely see" (Eliot, 205) what is hidden. The Polish poet Julian Przybos argues that to understand a metaphor is to "accept its pictorial content, to move the imagination, first and foremost." For him, poetic description is like detailed "painting with words," and a single well-chosen word can evoke a whole poetic picture, something like a "photograph taken in the flash of a light" (qtd. in Markiewicz, 551). A similar view is seen in Czeslaw Milosz’s Poetic Treatise (1957):

May my native speech be simple.
So that anyone who hears a word,
Should see apple trees, a river, a turn in the road,
As one sees in the flash of summer lightning.

(qtd. in Markiewicz, 551)

From all the foregoing treatments of the centuries-old tag, "ut pictura poesis," we can see that, despite the controversial nature of interpretation, most aestheticians and theorists seem to agree that poetic imagery has the potential to enable us to visualize and concretize the scene painted with words, and "make us more definitely see" (Eliot, 205) what is unseen. Subject and object, conscious and unconscious, seen and unseen, being and nonbeing, are subject to a process of uniting what is separate, very much like that of the Hegelian "negation ... in an affirmative form" (qtd. in
Chang Chung-yuan, 4), and that of Jung's unity of the conscious and the unconscious, which he identifies with Tao: "If we take Tao as the method or conscious way by which to unite what is separated, we have probably come quite close to the psychological content of the concept .... Without doubt also, the question of making opposites conscious ("conversion") means reunion with the laws of life represented in the unconscious, and the purpose of this reunion is the attainment of conscious life, or expressed in Chinese terms, the bringing about of Tao" (Wilhelm, 95-96).

History shows what has been said about the tag, "ut pictura poesis," and it also shows that "what has been said," as Graham says, "still gets said. The present not only repeats, it recapitulates the past" (Graham, 141). The present study is not to use Keats's poetry to prove the theory nor to fix Keats's poetry into it. What is relevant for this study is that the theory that poems are like pictures can find its practice extended and developed to perfection in many of Keats's poems as well as in Chinese poetry; for Keats, like many of the famous Chinese poets such as Li P'o [Li Bai] (701-761) and Tu Fu [Du Fu] (712-770), is radically given to thinking in images and writing poetic pictures and statues in language. In many of his poems such as "Ode to a Nightingale," Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion, which will be discussed later, Keats uses images to create symbols which go beyond the images that give rise to them. It is in this respect that Keats develops the tradition of "ut pictura poesis." Furthermore, it is Keats's ability to write poems like pictures
that makes possible a comparative study between the unusual qualities of his works and those of many famous Chinese poets.

Chinese Calligraphic Poetry as Painting

In one of the traditions of Chinese poetic theory, some critics seem to hold a view similar to the western tradition of poetry as a "speaking picture." For them, a good poem should read like a picture. It is not good poetry if it contains no picture. Nor is it good painting if there is no poetry in it. Poetry and painting fuse into one: poetry is painting with words, and painting is poetry without words. Does this have anything to do with specific characteristics of the Chinese language, or is it a universal truth which applies to all the languages in the world?

The history of language, not from the philological, but from the poetic point of view, suggests that language itself may be radically metaphorical, especially in its infancy. Emerson makes this clear in the discussion on "Language" in relation to poetry in his Nature by saying that "Because of this radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts, savages, who have only what is necessary, converse in figures. As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols [my emphasis]" (qtd. in Barfield, 92). In "Language and Poetry" of his Poetic Diction, Barfield says that it is in
"concrete vocabulary" in which "the world's first 'poetic diction'" rests:

Thus, a history of language written, not from the logician's, but from the poet's point of view, would proceed somewhat in the following manner: it would see in the concrete vocabulary which has left us the mythologies the world's first 'poetic diction'. Moving forward, it would come, after a long interval, to the earliest ages of which we have any written record -- the time of the Vedas in India, the time of the Iliad and Odyssey in Greece. At this stage it would find meaning still suffused with myth, and Nature all alive in the thinking of man.

(Barfield, 93)

Shelley seems to hold the same kind of view as Emerson and Barfield. In A Defense of Poetry, Shelley says that "language itself is poetry":

In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry; and to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression. Every original language near to
its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem; the copiousness of lexicography and the distinctions of grammar are the works of a later age, and are merely the catalogue and the form of the creations of poetry.

(Shelley, 516)

Shelley's statement has basically answered my question above about the poetic nature of the Chinese language, because, according to him, "every original language ... is in itself ... a cyclic poem" (Ibid.). But still the Chinese language has its unique features.

In the essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" written by Fenollosa and edited for publication by Pound, Fenollosa and Pound seem to emphasize that the Chinese written character possesses a unique pictorial quality that other languages hardly have. Fenollosa says that Chinese characters are "based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature" (Fenollosa, 8) and "their ideographic roots carry in them a verbal idea of action" (Fenollosa, 9). From a scholarly point of view, I do not think Fenollosa and Pound are absolutely right, because not every Chinese character is a pictogram or ideogram. But from a poet's point of view, I agree that, like Shelley, Emerson, and Barfield who believe that language is poetic, Fenollosa and Pound may be excused for asserting that the unique pictorial quality of the Chinese written character renders it the best medium for the writing of Chinese poetry, because Chinese characters (not all) as
"simple pictograms, simple ideograms, composite ideograms, and composite phonograms" (James Liu, 16) are, in most cases, "based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature" (Fenollosa, 8) and carry in them a "verbal idea of action" in "their ideographic roots" (Fenollosa, 9).

In focusing their attention on the symbols of the dynamic forces of the cosmos revealed in the Chinese written character as a medium for poetry, Fenollosa and Pound realize that Chinese characters differ from those of other ancient pictorial languages like Egyptian hieroglyphics in that each character contains in itself a time-space continuum. Each character could be seen and read, silently by the eye, one after the other just like the camera's eye from one shot to another. Since language is the root of poetry, Chinese poetry, "like music, is a time art, weaving its unities out of successive impressions of sound, and could with difficulty assimilate a verbal medium consisting largely of semi-pictorial appeals to the eye" (Fenollosa, 6). Even though the earliest Oracle Bone Script and Bronze Script of the Chinese character often assumed a pictographic form like the Egyptian hieroglyphic, the later ancient script evolved into an abstract shorthand of the dynamic force of things. In their essay, Fenollosa and Pound give a typical example of the development of the Chinese character from a pictorial representation to the symbolic evocation of the dynamic force of things: "Suppose that we look out of a window and watch a man. Suddenly he turned his head and actively fixes his attention upon something. We look ourselves and see that
his vision has been focused upon a horse. We saw, first, the man before he acted; second, while he acted; third, the object toward which his action was directed. In speech we split up the rapid continuity of this action and of its picture into its three essential parts or joints in the right order, and say: Man sees horse" (Fenollosa, 8). In Chinese characters, "Man sees horse" is written as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>man</th>
<th>see</th>
<th>horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oracle Bone Script</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Script</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Script</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Standardized Script)</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐎</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above, we can see that the Oracle Bone Script and the Bronze Script are like Egyptian hieroglyphs in that each Chinese character stands for a picture of "action": a standing man in the act of looking at a "moving" horse. But the ancient script "is based upon a vivid shorthand picture [my emphasis] of the operation of nature .... First stands the man on his two legs. Second, his
eye moves through space: a bold figure represented by running legs under an eye, a modified picture of an eye, a modified picture of running legs, but unforgettable once you have seen it. Third stands the horse on his four legs" (Fenollosa, 8). The former might be regarded as a pictorial representation of things while the latter a symbolic representation.

In the essay, Fenollosa continues to point out that the Chinese character does not only function etymologically as "short-hand pictures" but also reveals the dynamic force of nature. "The thought-picture is not only called up by these signs as well as words," Fenollosa says, "but far more vividly and concretely. Legs belong to all three characters: they are alive. The group holds something of the quality of a continuous moving picture" (Fenollosa, 9). This "moving picture" typifies the inner dynamics of "things in motion and motion in things."

Furthermore, Fenollosa asserts the superiority of verbal poetry, especially Chinese poetry, over painting or photography. For him, the untruth of a painting or a photograph "is that, in spite of its concreteness, it drops the element of natural succession" (Fenollosa, 9). For example, Fenollosa contrasts the Laocoon statue with Browning's lines:

I sprung to the stirrup, and Joris, and he

... ... ...

And into the midnight we galloped abreast...

(qtd. in Fenollosa, 9)
and concludes that poetry's superiority over painting or sculpture lies in "its getting back to the fundamental reality of time":

One superiority of verbal poetry as an art rests in its getting back to the fundamental reality of time. Chinese poetry has the unique advantage of combining both elements. It speaks at once with the vividness of painting, and with the mobility of sounds. It is, in some sense, more objective than either, more dramatic. In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling mental counters, but to be watching things work out their own fate.

(Fenollosa, 9)

In this respect, Fenollosa seems to hold the same view as Keats in asserting poetry's superiority over painting or sculpture. For Keats, poetry can not only get "back to the fundamental reality of time" and speak "at once with vividness of painting, and with the mobility of sounds," but also get back to the realm of timelessness. In "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," Keats asserts that poetry, unlike the Grecian marbles which were subject to time and change, can perpetuate the beauty and grandeur of them. For Fenollosa, the "unique advantage" of the Chinese character as a medium for poetry lies in its "getting back to the fundamental reality of time," and creating a sense of "motion in things and things in motion." In the essay, Fenollosa seems to say that "all Chinese characters," as James J. Y. Liu argues in The Art of
Chinese Poetry, "are pictograms or ideograms" (Liu, 3). But, in reality, the emphasis of his essay is on "an aesthetic ideal," as Cai points out, "centring on the concept of dynamic force. Neglecting this aesthetic prevents us from seeing Fenollosa and Pound's insight into the etymological, calligraphic, and aesthetic aspect of Chinese characters" (Cai, 171). Even though all languages are basically "pictograms or ideograms" at their birth, such as the English word, "Shakespeare" based on the image of a man shaking a spear, the Chinese language has its unique feature because of its square-structured characters. Each Chinese character, especially nouns and verbs, stands as a **framed-picture**. As the preceding example "Man sees horse" has shown, each character is self-contained. In each character, you can either see "motion in things" or "things in motion." Therefore, Fenollosa's emphasis on the "getting back to the fundamental reality of time" of Chinese characters is absolutely right. Furthermore, in classical Chinese, there is no tense structure as in the English language. Every Chinese character denotes the present time-space continuum. Even nowadays, Chinese use such single characters as "double-happiness," "longevity," as pictures on their walls or doors. Unlike Christians who live for a future paradise, the Chinese do not seem to have this notion of a future heavenly paradise. Like John Keats, the Chinese seem to live for the present. And that might be the reason why traditional Chinese poetry seems as fresh today as it was written even several thousand years ago because the realm of time for both Keats and traditional Chinese poets is actually the
realm of no-time. According to the Taoists, if everyday is a today, then there is no tomorrow or yesterday. Therefore, the Keatsian poet and traditional Chinese poets live in a realm of no time and write timeless poetry. That is why their poetry creates a sense of directness and concreteness for the reader or viewer, for it is a combination of the "vividness of painting" and the "mobility of sounds" (Fenollosa, 9). And it is through this fusion of poetry with painting and sculpture or music that the dynamic force of nature is revealed.

The dynamic force of nature latent in the Chinese character is not only embodied in Chinese verbal poetry but also in Chinese calligraphy. From the earliest period to the present day, the Chinese have never ceased to admire the dynamic force in the ancient script evoked by calligraphers and art connoisseurs. The famous poet, Han Yu (768-824), wrote in one of his well-known poems in praise of the aesthetic beauty of the ancient script:

Time has not yet vanquished the beauty of these letters ---
Looking like sharp daggers that pierce live crocodiles,
Like phoenix mates dancing, like angels hovering down,
Like trees of jade and coral with interlocking branches,
Like golden cord and iron chain tied together tight,
Like incense-tripods flung in the sea, like dragons mounting heaven.

(qtd. in Binner, 167)
Like Fenollosa and Pound, the poet praises the Chinese character for its powerful evocation of natural force. He regards each character stroke as an act of natural force. Some character strokes are like the "things in motion," and he praises them with phrases "like sharp daggers that pierce live crocodiles," "like phoenix mates dancing," "like dragons mounting heaven"; others are like "motions in things," and he compares them to "trees of jade and coral with interlocking branches," "golden cord and iron chain tied together tight." And through this powerful evocation of the dynamic force of nature in the character strokes, the ancient script becomes a work of art of aesthetic beauty.

The conscious evocation of the dynamic force in the Chinese character is best shown in Lady Wei Shuo's (c. 1700) "The Diagram of the Battle Array of the Brush" in which she likens calligraphy to a military battle:

Paper is battle ground; brush is sword and shield; ink is armour; inkstone is a city wall and a moat; the heart's intent is the general; technical skills are lower-ranking generals; and structure is the strategy. Lifting the brush heralds life and death; moving the brush executes a military order; and whatever comes under the brush is killed!

(qtd. in Cai, 178)

Here the position of paper, the movement of brush, the flow of ink,
the process of the mind, the structuring of characters and lines are all parts of the strategic plan. The spontaneous overflow of the calligrapher's emotions corresponds to the spontaneous movement of the brush in executing a piece of calligraphy. What is important here is not only emphasis on the dynamic forces in the characters but also the emphasis on "the indivisibility of shih [dynamic force] in terms of subject and object. The equilibrium of shih is found in paper and ink as much as in the meditative mind of the calligrapher. The release of shih propels the movement of the brush as much as the creative process of the calligrapher" (Cai, 178). The Chinese critics regard dynamic force as the soul of Chinese calligraphy, for the abstract rhythm of the movement of the brush aims at revealing the Tao, the ultimate cosmic principle, which generates and governs all forces in nature. In The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, the first systematic work of literary criticism in the Chinese tradition, Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie] (465-522) elucidates this concept of written language as a direct manifestation of Tao:

Human pattern originates in the Supreme, the Ultimate .... Words with pattern indeed express the mind of the universe! From Ho-t'u, the Yellow River Map, were born the eight trigrams, and from Lo-shu, the writing from the River Lo, came the nine categories. For these ... was anyone responsible? No. They are natural, organic expressions of the Miraculous.

30
(Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie], 15)

Here Liu Hsieh tells two famous stories about the origin of graphic markings and writing: a dragon in the Yellow River presents the Map, and a tortoise in the Lo River carries the Writing on its back. From these we can see that written language is a direct manifestation of nature itself. As Barfield has pointed out in his "Language and Poetry" in Poetic Diction, this is almost the case with the other languages such as the Vedic Sanskrit and the Greek language at their infancy when "Nature [was] all alive in the thinking of man" (Barfield, 93). In his comment on this relationship between the ancient Chinese and Nature, Cai says, "Since the ancient Chinese saw themselves as one of the manifold forms of nature, written language originating from their own mind would be essentially the same as forms brought forth by the dragon or the tortoise" (Cai, 181). The natural and the man-made, such as literature and arts, are interchangeable in the context of Chinese cosmology. In The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie] says:

The sounds of the forest wind blend to produce melody comparable to that of a reed pipe or lute, and the music created when a spring strikes upon a rock is melodious as the ringing tone of a jade instrument or bell. Therefore, just as when nature expresses itself in physical bodies there is plastic pattern, so also, when it expresses itself
in sound, there is a music pattern. Now if things which are devoid of consciousness express themselves so extremely decoratively, can that which is endowed with mind lack a pattern proper to itself?

(Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie], 13-15)

In this passage, Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie] identifies the natural with the unnatural or the artificial. The sounds of the forest and the sound from the reed pipe or lute fuse into one, for they are from the same source, nature, from its miraculous operations. Therefore, music and the plastic arts, like written language, are the direct manifestations of the great Tao. In the following passage, Liu Hsieh defines the musical, the visual, and the emotional as the three major human patterns in literature:

Three main patterns are involved in the creation of literature: the colour pattern, made up of the five colours; the sound pattern, made up of the five sounds; and the emotional pattern, made up of the five emotions. It is the mixing of the five basic colours which produces elegant embroidery; it is the harmonizing of the five basic sounds which creates ancient music .... and it is the expression of the five emotions which gives us the essence of literature. All these processes are natural results of the operation of the Miraculous.

(Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie], 337)
All these three patterns— the musical pattern, the visual pattern, the emotional pattern— deal with human sensations; therefore, they are "concrete" and "can be described" (Graham, 142) as patterns stemming from the operations of nature itself. It is this aesthetic ideal of evoking the natural force in language, literature, calligraphy, and all other arts that enabled the ancient Chinese to achieve a nondifferentiated, nonconceptual, and inexpressible primordial innocence. This ontological experience is often reflected in Chinese poetry.

As we have discussed above, the Chinese character as a medium for poetry best suits its purpose of poetic "picture writing" (Fenollosa, 22), for in it each word is pregnant, charged with meaning, and luminous from within. What the Chinese poet does is simply to use material images to suggest immaterial relations: a metaphorical process of passing from the seen to the unseen. The famous eleventh-century poem by Ch'eng Hao [Cheng Hao] (ca. 1015?) is a good illustration:

Near the middle of the day, when the clouds are thin and the breeze is light,
I stroll along the river, passing the willows and the blooming trees.
People of the day do not understand my joy;
They will say I am loafing like an idle young man.
(qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 170)
This is a perfect picture: mid-day, thin clouds, light breeze, strolling man, the river, willows and blooming trees. These material images reveal the immaterial relationship between man and nature. Through the interfusion between man and nature, the poet experiences an unspeakable inner joy. Unfortunately, it cannot be shared by the "people of the day" because they are so busy with their daily life. Only the man of Tao who dives directly into the heart of things and establishes an inner relationship with nature can truly experience this inner joy.

The tone and mood of Ch'eng Hao's poem is very much similar to those of Keats's "Ode on Indolence." In his letter to Teignmouth of 9 June 1819, Keats tells us that what he has "most enjoyed this year has been writing an ode to Indolence" (Keats, II, 116). Earlier in the spring of 1819, Keats told his brother and sister-in-law in his journal letter about the occasion in which the ode was written:

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

(Keats, II, 78-79)

In the poem, the poet tells how, in his summer drowsy numbness, he is interrupted by three shadowy figures who twice swept past him unrecognized, revealed themselves on their third appearance as Love, Ambition, and Poesy, and then vanished:

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
And ached for wings, because I knew the three:
The first was a fair maid, and Love her name;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek, --
I knew to be my demon Poesy.
The three "shadows" — "Love," "Ambition," and "Poesy" — represent the objects of desire for the poet. But in "The blissful cloud of summer-indolence" when "Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower," first they represented an invasion of the poet's "delicious diligent Indolence" when they twice passed by, but when they passed by the third time they appeared to be an unattainable goal, and momentarily the poet "ached for wings" (Ibid.) to pursue them. In the fourth stanza, he refuses to wake up and discards his aspiration "to follow them" as "folly" (Ibid.):

O folly! What is Love? and where is it?
And that poor Ambition -- it springs
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
For Poesy! -- no, -- she has not a joy, --
At least for me, -- so sweet as drowsy noons,
   And evening steep'd in honied indolence;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
   Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!
   (Ibid.)

The poet regrets having discovered their identity because his "sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams" and his "soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er/With flowers ..." (Ibid.). Like the Chinese
poet Ch‘eng Hao, Keats prefers a life "so sweet as drowsy noons," and "steep’d in honied indolence." He refuses to know the "change of the moons," and "hear the voice of busy common-sense." Like Ch‘eng Hao, the poet feels sorry for the "people of the day" who cannot share his bliss of "summer-Indolence" because they care too much about the "fever-fit" of "poor Ambition" and celebrity as the public’s "pet-lamb" (Keats, 286). Unlike the speakers in the "Nightingale" and the "Grecian Urn" the speaker in "Indolence," after a momentary desire to return to "busy common-sense," vows to remain in vision’s antechamber:

So, ye three ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
Vanish, ye phantoms, from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return!

(Keats, 286)

Like Ch‘eng Hao’s poem, the ode celebrates ordinary idleness or wise passiveness which represents the more meaningful existence for Keats because the richness of all choices is still available to
him. Like a Taoist, through the interfusion between man and nature, the poet experiences an unspeakable inner joy by remaining in "Indolence" or "nonaction" in the summer drowsy noon with his "head cool-bedded in the flowery grass" (Ibid.).

In the Analects of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), there is a story about this idea of unity between man and his surroundings. One day, Confucius asked his pupils about their ambitions. One said that he would like to be a minister of war, another a minister of finance, still another an official in the prince's court. His fourth pupil, Tseng Tien, did not pay any attention to this exchange and quietly strummed his lute. When Confucius asked him what he would like to do, he said that he would like to go in the spring to bathe in the river with his companions, enjoy the breeze, and go home singing. On hearing that, Confucius said: "I approve of Tien" (Chang, 52). Here the inner joy expressed by Tseng Tien is similar to that of the poet Ch'eng Hao [Cheng Hao] as well as that of Keats in his "Ode on Indolence," and is an expression of one's ontological experience. And this ontological experience, according to the Taoist theory, is intuitive self-awareness, which has little to do with logical reasoning. In this state of nonbeing, man is free from obstructions and not distorted and distracted by external things. He is completely identified with the Universe and all things. He has no self. His self is lost in the realm of nonbeing where it sometimes manifests itself as primordial innocence and sometimes as transcendental spirituality. A serene purity growing out of innocence is best manifested in Li P'o's [Li Bai's] poems.
In a poem entitled "On A Quiet Night," the poet sings:

I saw the moonlight before my couch,
And wondered if it were not the frost on the ground.
I raised my head and looked out on the mountain moon;
I bowed my head and thought of my far-off home.

(Obata, Li P’o, 57)

Like John Keats, Li P’o is a moon poet. In Taoist terms, the moon represents Yin because it is the reflected light of the sun, which is Yang. Li P’o’s [Li Bai] recurring symbol of the moon has also been noticed by Arthur Cooper. In his comparison between Li P’o [Li Bai] and Tu Fu [Du Fu], he says, "Li P’o [Li Bai] is the Taoist in this pair of poets, and his constantly recurring symbol is the reflected light of the Moon at night; while Tu Fu [Du Fu] is the Confucian who from early childhood made the Phoenix his symbol, the Fire Bird symbolzing the Yang" (Cooper, 18). Here in the poem, like Endymion’s dissolution into the life of Cynthia in Keats’s Endymion, the poet is dissolved into the moonlight which merges with the frost on the ground. In this realm of nondifferentiation, the poet mistakes the moonlight for the frost, and dreams of his "far-away home" --the bosom of the Mother. The poetic innocence is reflected as immediately as the moonlight on the ground. In another poem Li P’o [Li Bai] expresses his transcendental joy in staying in the green mountains:
Why do I live among the green mountains?
I laugh and answer not, my soul is serene:
It dwells in another heaven and earth
belonging to no man.
The peach trees are in flower, and the water
flows on ....

(Obata, Li P'o, 73)

Here ontological experience and poetic experience are one. In this "pure serenification" of the blue mountains, the poet experiences an inner joy which is in "proximity to the Most Joyous" (Heidegger, 280).

In Existence and Being, Heidegger talks about the poetic experience as a "Joyous" process of "disclosure or unconcealment [aletheia]" (Adams, 1090) of Being:

The poet knows that, in calling the discovery "the reserved," he is saying something which the ordinary understanding will struggle against.... That is why the poet, almost as soon as he has spoken the line about the mystery of the reserving proximity, has to descend to the phrase: "Foolish is my speech." But nevertheless he is speaking. The poet must speak, for "It is joy." ... The writing of poetry is not primarily a cause of joy to the poet, rather the writing of poetry is joy, is serenification, because it is in writing that the
principal return home consists.... To write poetry means to exist in that joy, which preserves in words the mystery of proximity to the Most Joyous.

(Heidegger, 280)

Here Heidegger identifies the poetic experience with primordial innocence. Like Liu Hsieh [Liu Xie], Heidegger identifies poetry writing with natural expression: it is not joy to the poet who writes poetry, but the writing of poetry itself is joy. Heidegger further maintains:

The Serene preserves and holds everything in tranquillity and wholeness.... It is the holy. For the poet, the "Highest" and the "Holy" are one and the same; the Serene. As the origin of all that is joyous it remains the Most Joyous. Here occurs the pure serenification.

(Heidegger, 281)

In "O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell," Keats expresses the same kind of feeling of pure serenification. Here he identifies serenification with "solitude" in "Nature's observatory":

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep, --
Nature's observatory -- whence the dell,

41
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.
But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refine'd,
Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

(Keats, 14)

Like Li P'o [Li Bai] who prefers staying in the solitary blue mountains instead of serving in the court, Keats prefers "dwell[ing]" in "Solitude" in "Nature's observatory -- whence the dell,/Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,/May seem a span" instead of "be[ing] among the jumbled heap/Of murky buildings." "'Mong boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap/Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell," the poet enjoys "the highest bliss of human kind." Like Wordsworth and Li P'o [Li Bai], Keats believes that it is the achievement of this pure serenification in "Solitude," the Taoist state of nonaction, that constitutes the highest achievement of the poet. The poet's mission is to invite the reader to confront directly the objective reality which the poet originally faced so that the "subjectivity of the reader and the objective reality in the poem," as Chang
says, "interfuse without obstruction and distortion from the interference of the poet. This is what the Chinese critics call the principle of directness" (Chang, 175).

In *Criticism of Poetry in the Mundane World*, Wang Kuo-wei [Wang Guowei] (1877-1927) elucidates this idea of directness in poetry:

The poems written by T'ao Ch'ien (373-427) and Hsieh Ling-Yun (385-433) give you the impression of directness. The poems by Li Yen-nien sometimes not....

The idea of directness can be illustrated by the following lines: "Around the pond April grass is growing," or "under the beam the swallows’ nest is empty, from it the clay is dropping." The effectiveness of these lines is brought about by the subtlety of directness.

(qtd. in Chang, 175)

Here the concrete images like the pond, April grass, deserted swallow nest, and the falling clay form a vivid picture. Because the radically visual nature of these powerful, concrete images in the poem, the reader is instantly brought into direct contact with the objective reality the poet originally confronted. Without any comment from the poet, the reader is free to respond to it directly and spontaneously. Maritain describes this kind of verse as "clear poems": "Such poems are condensed, the expression is purely restricted to the essentials, any discursive or oratorical development and liaison has been replaced by allusive streaks. But
they are clear poems.... the intelligible sense, although still explicit, is, as it were, not circumscribed, I would say, open" (Maritain, 196).

To be direct in poetry is to penetrate into the source of things, to make them be themselves, and to reveal their true nature. Through this direct confrontation between the reader and the poem, the interfusion between the subjective reality of the beholder and the objective reality of the picture takes place. This unity between subject and object is not achieved through logical conceptualization but through the spiritual rhythm flowing back and forth between them. A poem is no longer a mere visual description nor is it a turning loose of the poet's emotions. It becomes an expression of poetical existence. The following two poems by Wang Wei (701-761) are typical examples of this kind of poetical experience:

**White Stone Bank**

White Stone Bank River, shallow, clear,
Meanders past a sparse handful of rushes.
Families on the east and west banks
Wash silk in the silver moonlight.

(Wang Wei, 40-41)

**Waves of Willow**
The Swaying branches of the willow row mingle their silken garments in caresses.
Reflected shadows ripple the clear water.
Be not like those willows weeping on the imperial embankment
Which sadden people parting in the cold spring wind ....

(Ibid.)

In these poetic pictures, the poet identifies himself with the external world, and a spontaneous overflow of inner joy is reflected without any distortion or limitation from ego-consciousness. The poet is as free as the "silver moonlight" and as purposeless as the "clear water." In the second poem, "Waves of Willow," the image of the slender "willow branch" was a symbol of the thread of longing," as Chang and Walmsley note, "which bound intimate friends together. In the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) the custom of snapping twigs along the imperial embankment represented parting" (Chang and Walmsley, 40). And, in both poems, the concrete images become mere symbols of evocation of the interfusion between Man and Nature -- the manifestation of the great Tao.

Like Wang Wei and Li P'o [Li Bai], Keats uses concrete images in his poetry to suspend the movement at a frozen moment to evoke the dynamic interchange between man and nature. Even though some of the images like the figures on a Grecian urn are static, or non-dynamic, they are dynamic in producing a shock of self-consciousness for the reader by putting him into the picture. It is
the interfusion between subject and object by means of a concrete image as a "stain" in the poetic picture that renders Keats's poetry more appropriate than the verse of other Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Shelley for a comparative study with the poetry of some of the classical Chinese poets. Unlike his contemporaries, Keats is objective and egoless. His poetry is like painting and sculpture. Like the Taoist poet Li P'o, Keats simply presents the objective reality in his poetry without any "interference of the poet" (Chang, 175); therefore, his poetry gives us "the impression of directness" (Ibid.) like the poems written by the traditional Chinese poets such as Li P'o [Li Bai] and Wang Wei.

Image as Anamorphic Gaze

In contrast to the Chinese aesthetics of natural force, western aesthetics is deeply rooted in the classical mimetic concept of written language. Even though the Romantics and the post-romantics attempted to break away from the traditional theory of mimesis, the theory that the written language is but only a representation of speech continues to exercise its influence even today. In his effort to counter neoclassical diction, Wordsworth prefers the use of low and rustic language of the common people because he strongly believes that it is "a far more philosophical language" (Wordsworth, 597). In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth says:
The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language ....

(Wordsworth, 597)

Wordsworth believes that the language of the common people is "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" (Wordsworth, 594) because these low and rustic people "hourly communicate with the best objects" in nature. Their words are full of "vivid sensations" and filled with "that quantity of pleasure" that "a poet may rationally endeavour to impart" (Wordsworth, 595). For Wordsworth, words function "not only as symbols of the passion, but as things, active and efficient, which are part of the passion" (Wordsworth, 594). From all this we can see that Wordsworth's theory of language and poetry differs dramatically from the mimetic theory of the classicists and the neo-classicists. First of all, Wordsworth proposes to use the "real language" of the "common people" instead of "representation of speech," which is in turn a
representation of the absolute subject. Secondly, words from the mouths of the low and rustic people are concrete expressions of feelings, passions, and pleasures rather than "arbitrary and capricious ... expression[s], in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their [poets'] own creation" (Wordsworth, 597). Lastly and most importantly, words are "things" instead of the "imitations of imitations." Like the Taoists, Wordsworth believes that the words spoken by the common people who are "less under the influence of social vanity" are direct manifestations of nature, for their words are their concrete passions "incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature" (Wordsworth, 597).

For Coleridge, it is not the rustic oral speech of the low and uneducated people in the countryside but the written symbols by a poetic genius that make the absolute subject present in language itself. In The Statesman’s Manual, Coleridge says:

... a Symbol is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative.

(Coleridge, 503)
Even though Wordsworth and Coleridge attempted to go beyond mimetic poetry, they still operated within the value system of signifier and signified. As Chang points out, "their poetic innovations chiefly consist in reversing the orders of speech and writing, signifier and signified, and in arguing for the presence of the absolute subject in language itself" (Chang, 183).

Inspired by his discovery with Fenollosa of the dynamic force in Chinese poetry, which he saw as the essential deficiency of Western pictorialism, Pound developed a theory of kinetic image in the light of Vorticist aesthetics: "The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a Vortex, from which and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing" (Pound, 92). He believes that poetry is "an emotional and intellectual complex in an instant of time," and it is a process in which "a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective" (Pound, 103).

In his account of the long compositional history of his "In a Station of the Metro," he reveals how his own poetic theory came into being:

Three years ago in Paris I got out a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face and another and another ... and I tried all that day for words for what that had meant for me.... And that evening ... I found suddenly the expression.... Not in speech but in sudden
splotches of colour ... but it was a word, the beginning for me of a new language in colour....

I wrote a thirty-line poem and destroyed it because it was what we call work of the second intensity. Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following hokku-like sentence.

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

... In a poem of this sort, one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or dart into a thing inward and subjective.

(Pound, 86-103)

Pound's theory of the dynamic image was certainly not a direct result of his research on the Chinese written character as a medium for poetry. But his discovery of the symbols of the dynamic forces of the cosmos revealed in Chinese character, to some extent, did help him to find full vindication of the kinetic image.

Semioticians call this kinetic image the iconic sign. Within these signs and their system there exists a resemblance between the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, who provided the most influential definition of the sign within the
the sign functions as a union of a form which signifies - the signifier - and an idea signified - the signified. "The sign is for Saussure," as Stam summarizes in New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: "the central fact of language, and the primordial opposition of signifier/signified constitutes the founding principle of structural linguistics. The signifier is the sensible, material, acoustic or visual signal which triggers a mental concept, the signified. The perceptible aspect of the sign is the signifier; the absent mental representation evoked by it is the signified, and the relationship between the two is signification. The signified is not a "thing," an image or a sound, but rather a mental representation" (Stam, 8). For Saussure, the "signified" does not really refer to a "thing" itself. For example, the signified of "cat" does not refer to a real cat, the animal itself, but rather to a mental representation of a feline creature. In other words, Saussure's signifier signifies a mental representation rather than a "thing," "an image or a sound" (Ibid.).

French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan combines Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory with semiotics/semiology, thus offering a means for linking semiotic and psychoanalytic readings of poetry. Lacan's insight is to rephrase Freudian theory by introducing a linguistic model into the Freudian process of bringing repressed mental material into consciousness. According to Freud, human life is a process of a constant need to repress our natural tendencies toward gratification (the "pleasure principle") in the name of
conscious activity (the "reality principle"). The movement is, therefore, essentially biological and developmental. For Lacan, the process is also linguistic; we come to be who we are in and through language. Lacan designates as "the Other" that unconscious site of language discourse, signification, and desire. In his Literary Theory: An Introduction, Terry Eagleton says:

[The "Other"] is that which like language is always anterior to us and will always escape us, that which brought us into being as subjects in the first place but which always outruns our grasp....We desire what others -- our parents, for instance -- unconsciously desire for us; and desire can only happen because we are caught up in linguistic, sexual and social relations -- the whole field of the "Other" -- which generate it.

(Eagleton 1983: 174)

The unconscious is central to both Freud and Lacan. For Freud, the "unconscious" is that place to which unfulfilled desires are relegated in the process of repression which forms it. As such, the "unconscious" is conceived as that "Other scene/stage" in which the drama of the psyche is played out by means of dreams, neuroses, symptoms, jokes, puns and slips of the tongue. For Lacan, this "unconscious" is both produced and made available to us in language: the moment we become the subjects in and of language.

In general, Lacan's concept of the imaginary corresponds to
that of the pre-Oedipal phase of Freud, although the child is already a signifier inserted in a linguistic system. But in this world of the imaginary, the child is still in an illusory unity with the Mother, whom he does not know as Other. He has to move on from the world of the imaginary, not because of his fear of castration but because he acquires language, which is based on the concept of "lack". He enters the world of the symbolic governed by the law of the Father, a world revolving around the phallus as signifier. Here, in this linguistic world of the symbolic, he finds himself to be an object in a realm of signifiers that circulate around the Father. The moment he learns the difference between "You" and "I," his illusory unity with the Mother is broken partly by his recognition, in the mirror phase, of the Mother as a separate image/entity, of himself as an image (ego-ideal), realizing the split-subject, and partly by introducing the Father as a linguistic Third Term, thus breaking the mother-child dyad and forming the triad. Now the child becomes the subject of his own discourse and lives in the symbolic. But he still participates in the world of the imaginary; it is this world that the experience of literature and the arts partly recreates.

Since the human subject is irremediably split between conscious and unconscious at birth, it is but a desiring being almost entirely defined by lack. In The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (Seminar XI), Lacan makes the birth of desire clear by invoking the story told by Aristophanes in Plato's Symposium:
... in the beginning we were nothing like we are now. For one thing the race was divided into three ... besides the two sexes, male and female, which we have at present, there was a third which partook of the nature of both.... And secondly ... each of these beings was globular in shape, with rounded back and sides, four arms and four legs, and two faces.... And such ... were their strength and energy, and such their arrogance, that they actually tried ... to scale the heights of heaven and set upon gods. At this Zeus took counsel with the other gods as to what was to be done.... At last ... after racking his brains, Zeus offered a solution.

I think I can see my way, he said, to put an end to this disturbance.... What I propose to do is to cut them all in half, thus killing two birds with one stone, for each one will be only half as strong, and there'll be twice as many of them....

Now, when the work of bisection was complete it left each half with a desperate yearning for the other, and they ran together and flung their arms around each other's necks, and asked for nothing better to be rolled into one. So much so, that they began to die.... Zeus felt so sorry for them that he devised another scheme. He moved their privates round to the front.... and made them propagate among themselves .... So you see ... how far back we can trace our innate love for one another, and how this love is
always trying to reintegrate our former nature, to make two into one, and to bridge the gulf between one human being and other.

(Plato, 542-44)

Aristophanes’ speech contains several of the most important Lacanian assumptions: first, the human subject derives from an original whole which was split at birth; second, the division suffered by the subject was sexual in nature; finally, the only solution to the loss is through heterosexual union and procreation. In order for the human subject to be whole, it has to rely on the important role played by the visual images in the identifications of the imaginary order: the subject’s identification with the mother’s breast, voice, gaze, or whatever other object that is perceived as its missing complement. Lacan calls these objects as "objets petit a," which is an abbreviation for the more complete formula "objets petit autre." This rubric designates objects not clearly distinguished from the self and not clearly grasped as other (autre) by the subject. And the objet a, as we will henceforth call it, derives its value from its identification with some missing component of the subject’s self, whether that loss is primordial or by accident.

John Keats gives us a conspicuous example of the objet a in "Isabella"; indeed, the entire poem is centred on this. The romance of "Isabella, or The Pot of Basil," taken from Boccaccio’s Decameron, tells how Isabella’s lover, Lorenzo, is murdered by her
villainous brothers. The ghost of Lorenzo returns to visit her in a nightly vision and tells her about his murder. She follows his instructions and finds him murdered in the forest. She disinters his head and hides it in a pot planted with basil. Isabella dies after her brothers steal the plant.

In the beginning of the poem, Lorenzo and Isabella are seen to be deep in love. The mutual feeling between the lovers makes them into one: Isabella is all to Lorenzo and he to her. This is shown in the remarkably powerful image created by the line "But her full shape would all his seeing fill" (Keats, 184). At this point, "Lorenzo identifies himself with Isabella," as Hirst says; "so we identify with Lorenzo's sensations: as Isabella is cast into Lorenzo, so are we, until 'her full shape' fills our seeing, too. The image not merely converts the visual into the tactile but suggests contact, roundness, contentedness, ripeness, completion -- fulfilment" (Hirst, 88). Here Isabella's "uncanny" identification with Lorenzo inevitably solicits the gaze of her brothers who will try anything to put an end to it. Because of this imaginary identification and duality between the lovers, the loss of Lorenzo becomes unbearable to Isabella. She can neither eat nor sleep. She becomes a symbol of melancholy. In a dream, Lorenzo appears before her and solicits her gaze; there she finds "the most profound lost object" in her life. Throughout the rest of the poem Isabella is shown first to be desperately trying to recover the lost object and then obsessively taking care of the pot of basil (with Lorenzo's head buried inside) in a vain attempt to compensate for the loss of
her lover - her other half, a loss which she experiences as an amputation.

The pot of basil in the poem functions as that amputated object in Isabella's life. For Lacan, this amputated object is the objet a in its anamorphic or distorted form in the poetic picture; it is "phallic" in essence. Lacan locates this phallic dimension precisely in the supplementary feature that "sticks out," that is "out of place" in the idyllic surface scene and "denatures" it, and renders it "uncanny." This objet a is "the point of anamorphosis in the picture," Zizek explains, "the element that, when viewed straightforwardly, remains a meaningless stain, but which, as soon as we look at the picture from a precisely determined lateral perspective, all of a sudden acquires well-known contours" (Zizek, 90).

In The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Lacan gives us an example of the function of anamorphosis. His point of reference is Hans Holbein's picture, The Ambassadors, of 1533 (Lacan, 88). At the bottom of the picture, there is a "strange, suspended, oblique" amorphous, extended, "erected" spot, a "stain" under the figures of the two ambassadors (Ibid.) The two figures are motionless, "frozen," "stiffened in their showy adornments" (Ibid.). There are objects of vanity and works of arts and sciences between them. Before this marvellous showing of the fancy appearance of human vanity, that punctiform object in the foreground of the picture seems to be "flying through the air" (Ibid.). Only when, by stepping out of the room where the picture
is on display, and suddenly turning around as he leaves, can the viewer of the picture apprehend that this "spot" acquires the contour of ... what? A skull, thus revealing the secret meaning of the picture -- the nullity of all symbols of vanity: all the earthly goods and objects of arts and sciences that fill out the rest of the picture. In his own comment on the picture, Lacan argues that Holbein here makes visible what is "repressed" or "annihilated":

Holbein makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated -- annihilated in the form that is, strictly speaking, the imaged embodiment of the "minus-phi" of castration, which for us, centres the whole organization of desires through the framework of the fundamental drives.

(Lacan, 89)

Lacan defines the "phallic" signifier as a "signifier without signified" which, as such, "renders possible," Zizek observes, "the effects of the signified: the 'phallic' element of a picture is a meaningless "stain" that 'denatures' it, rendering all its constituents 'suspicious,' and thus pins up the abyss of the search for a meaning -- nothing is what it seems to be, everything is to be interpreted, everything is supposed to possess some supplementary meaning. The ground established, familiar signification opens up; we find ourselves in a realm of total
ambiguity, but this lack propels us to produce ever new 'hidden meaning': it is a driving force of endless compulsion" (Zizek, 91).

Lacan's phallic "signifier without signified" has something in common with T. S. Eliot's famous remark about the "objective correlative." In "Hamlet and His Problems," Eliot argues that what Hamlet is really suffering from is "the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings" (Eliot, 766). His disgust is neither occasioned by his mother's guilt (for she is "not an adequate equivalent for it") nor is he able to "objectify it" (Ibid.). As the "stain" in the representation, Hamlet himself becomes the gaze, the "uncanny" and "unnatural" (because of his madness) spot that renders everything mysterious and loaded with double meaning. As a phallic signifier, the symbol of suffering, Hamlet as gaze in this royal picture signifies nothing but lack of objectification; for the "very nature of the donnees of the problem precludes objective equivalence" (Ibid.). To put this Lacanian formula of the "signifier without signified" in another way, from the very moment that the "phallic" "stain" or spot appears and solicits our gaze, the subject viewing it begins to lose itself into that vanishing point and becomes that punctiform object; for that paradoxical point undermines the subject's position as "neutral," "objective" observer and therefore forces him to be pinned to the observed object itself. That is the reason why Lacan says that this "phallic" spot is the point at which the spectator viewing it is always included, inscribed in the observed picture -- in a way, and this is the point from which the picture itself gazes back at
In "Isabella," the famous Keatsian controlling imagery, the Pot of Basil or "Lorenzo's Skull" -- the "stain" in the picture that is "sticking out," that is "out of place," that is "flying" to the foreground of the picture, rendering things "uncanny," and loaded with horror and threatening possibilities -- functions exactly as the point of anamorphosis, the point from which the picture itself gazes back at the viewer. Just imagine that we are looking straightforwardly at this picture of Isabella's chamber decorated with objects of human vanities and all kinds of natural flowers in pots; we cannot see anything "uncanny" or "out of place." But when we look awry at the picture, suddenly we notice that there is something "denatured," "unnatural," rendering it loaded with double meanings; that is, we see that Pot of Basil plant (with Lorenzo's skull hidden in it), which is "more balmy than" all the natural basil plants:

Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of Basil-tufts in Florence.... (my emphasis)

(Keats, 196)

Like the skull in Holbein's The Ambassadors, Lorenzo's skull in the Pot of Basil functions as the subject which is "annihilated," "repressed."

In Lacanian theory, this "annihilated" or "repressed" subject
is bound to find its way back to the foreground of the picture through the drive as unconditional demand on which it is not prepared to give way: a demand for a proper burial for itself. Like the ghost of Hamlet's father who returns from his grave to demand that Hamlet avenge his infamous death, Lorenzo's ghost returns to Isabella and demands that she avenge his murder. In both cases, the return of the dead is a sign of their return as collectors of some unpaid debt. In his answer to the question of why the dead return, Zizek paraphrases Lacan's saying that the dead return *because they were not properly buried*: that is, because something went wrong with their obsequies* (Zizek, 23).

The scene of Lorenzo's skull in "Isabella" demonstrates perfectly how the fascinating object that drives the narrative movement is ultimately the gaze itself: this narrative movement is suspended when the murderers' gaze (Isabella's brothers'), while they are inspecting what is going on in their sister's mysterious chamber after Lorenzo's murder, meets the gaze of the Other (the murdered). At this moment, the brothers lose their position as "neutral," "objective," and distant observers of the Pot of Basil, and thereby they are caught up in the "business" affair: that is, they become part of what they observed (the interfusion of subjectivity takes place in the Taoist sense). Most precisely, they are forced to confront the question of their own desire: what do they really want from this affair?

As Stillinger notes, the brothers had no motives for the murder other than that Lorenzo's stolen love with Isabella "was altogether
against their liking" (Keats, 442). In other words, it was the murderers' pure drive as unconditional demand that Lorenzo be eliminated because of his threat to the reputation of both Isabella and the family. But human desire is locked up in a closed circuit: once the goal is reached, the drive returns anew. It is an infinite return to the circuit. According to Lacan, the difference between the "goal" and the "aim" is that the goal is the destination, while the "aim" is the way itself. The real purpose of the drive is not the goal but its aim. In other words, the real purpose of the drive in its demand to return to the circuit is not the destination but the way itself. In the final analysis, the drive's aim is simply to reproduce itself as drive, to return to its circular path:

When you entrust someone with a mission, the aim is not what he brings back, but the itinerary he must take. The aim is the way taken.... If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point-of-view of a biological totalization of function, would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its aim is simply this return into circuit.


From this we can see that there is not really anything that the murderers of Lorenzo want from him after he is murdered. The real source of their "enjoyment" is the repetitive production of drive
within the closed circuit. To put it another way, they cannot really kill Lorenzo (both symbolically and in reality) nor can they get rid of his cold gaze: the more desperately they try, the more dangerous it becomes; and this exemplary case is similar to what Zizek mentioned in his discussion about the function of the Jews in Nazi discourse: the more they were killed, the fewer their numbers, the greater their threat seemed to the Nazis, as if their threat grew in proportion to their diminution in reality. Zizek calls this a typical "case of the subject's relation to the horrifying object that embodies its surplus enjoyment: the more we fight against it, the more its power over us grows" (Zizek, 6).

Where does this power of the object of desire over the subject come from? Why does the Pot of Basil function as the object of the murderers' desire? There is only one answer possible: the Pot of Basil realizes the murderers' desire. Of course, their desire is simply to get rid of Lorenzo completely at any price, even at the price of their sister's life [here, ironically, the "proper burial" of Lorenzo's Head by the murderers (they stole Isabella's Pot of Basil and secretly buried Lorenzo's skull) leads to the exposure of their murderous crime; thus Isabella avenges her lover's murder through an amanerotic process]. In a word, the horrifying Pot of Basil functions as the cold gaze of Lorenzo's skull that makes the murderers unable to know if they are actually gazed at all the time -- this uncertainty intensifies their feeling of threat, of the impossibility of escape from the gaze of the Other, and, eventually, the impossibility of their escape from their crime.
The focus of this thesis is a conception of the famous Keatsian imagery as a formal procedure whose aim is to produce a shock of self-consciousness [or a surprise "into a perception" (Wordsworth, 635)] by means of a "stain" in the poetic picture, a point of anamorphosis, a point from which the image itself looks at the viewer, the point of the gaze of the Other. This anamorphic image functions as a means by which the interfusion and interpenetration between subject and object/desire, signifier and signified, conscious and unconscious, being and nonbeing, man and nature are made possible. The effort is not meant to impose some foreign vocabularies on Keats's poetry; instead, it intends to provide a way of describing specific procedures in Keats's poetry as the emerging poet attempts to create a mature "poetical character" with a consciousness which develops very much like that of Lacan's human self, but which grows dialectically toward "poethood" rather than selfhood. Furthermore, by comparing Keats's poetry with some of the best works in Chinese literature in the light of Taoism, psychoanalysis, and comparative poetics, we will better understand his poetry and recognize him as one of the most original poets of all time -- a poet "whose name was writ in Water" (Hirst, 15), a poet with "no self," a poet who can be regarded as "the perfect man" in the truest sense of a Taoist (Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], 18).
After the general introduction in chapter one, the second deals with the invisible ground of sympathetic imagination, the third Keats's "negative capability" and the Taoist "middle path," the fourth Keats's Lamia and the Chinese legend The White Snake, and the last concludes with some thoughts on the identity of the poet's non-identity.

Throughout the discussion, the focus of the thesis is on the pictorial and sculptural qualities of Keats's poetry in comparison with many poems in the Chinese and western traditions. Efforts have also been made to combine psychoanalytical theory and Taoist philosophy and poetics to shed light on the discussion. Even though the thesis seeks to assess Keats's poetry through an analogy with the plastic arts and to extend this assessment through conceptual categories provided by psychoanalysis (with reference to the poet's maturing into 'poethood') and Taoist philosophy (with reference to the poet's philosophy of "negative capability"), it does not assert that Keats is a Taoist nor does it claim that he is a psychoanalyst. Keats is mainly a poet dealing with human emotion, love, beauty, truth, and imagination. As a chameleon poet, he is free to be anything he wants to be. Like a Taoist, by not asserting anything, he asserts everything; by being negatively capable in uncertainties, he obtains truth through sympathetic imagination on the basis of non-being. Like a psychoanalyst, he reveals what is "annihilated" and "repressed" in the abyss of the human mind, and makes the unconscious conscious by means of poetry. As a poet, he achieves his own identity in and through poetic language. Call him
whatever name you like, Keats is a poet speaking poetry like a philosopher, a psychoanalyst, and, maybe, a Taoist.
Invisible Ground of Sympathetic Imagination

The Truth of Imagination

For John Keats, truth or knowledge is acquired not by means of "consequitive reasoning" (I, 183-87) but through the senses, the heart, the sympathetic imagination. In the letter on "the truth of imagination" written to Bailey on 22 November 1817 (I, 183-87), he says that "Men of Genius," unlike "Men of Power," "are great as Certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect--[but] they have not any individuality, any determined Character," any "proper self." The minds of "Men of Genius," impartially open to all new impressions, act imaginatively yet imperceptibly, and effect changes like a catalyst without imposing their own characteristics and preferences. In his response to Bailey's "momentary start about the authenticity of the
imagination," Keats asserts his declaration of faith in the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination:

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination -- What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth -- whether it existed before or not -- for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty.

(Keats, Letters, I, 184)

Keats's belief here that whatever is Beautiful is as real as a fact known to be true is later on echoed in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," where he says that "Beauty is truth" (Keats, 283). For Keats, the poetical process is closely associated with the aesthetic process. Even though beauty is perceived and created by the harmonizing imagination, Keats still believes that what the imagination catches must be true. Keats does not value so highly a truth independently apprehended by abstract analysis. In the letter, as Hirst says, the word "truth" simply "appears to mean 'reality.'" Keats implies that a work of art on paper, on canvas, or in stone, whether still in the artist's brain or recreated in the mind of the audience, is as real as a natural phenomenon whose existence is an undeniable 'truth.'" (Hirst, 38).

As an inner experience instead of an abstract analytic process, the Keatsian formula "Beauty is truth" shows that the power of
imagination transcends our everyday experience. It can create something "whether it existed or not." The only criterion for the imagination's creation of reality is beauty, not the imitation of existing models or the imitation of an imitation: the Grecian Urn Keats creates in his ode is real even though it is not based on a particular one. Keats compares the imagination to "Adam's dream -- he awoke and found it truth." Criticizing a simple philosophical inquiry into truth, Keats declares his preference for "a life of sensations rather than of Thoughts!" In his comment, Caldwell has demonstrated that "what Keats means by a life of sensation is the life of the imagination, a life solidly grounded in bygone events of eye, ear, palate, etc., but modifying, refining, and ramifying them into infinitely complex chains of [associations]" (Caldwell, 155-56). Furthermore, Keats's "delight in sensation" requires immediate satisfaction instead of the happiness "hereafter" where "we shall enjoy ourselves ... by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated." Keats says that "I look not for it [happiness] if it is not in the present hour, nothing startles me beyond the present Moment. The setting sun will always set me to rights -- or if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel" (Keats, Letters, I, 184). This powerful feeling illustrates Keats's capacity for empathy, of participating in the life of another being. It is the sympathetic imagination that enables him to enter into the feeling of the sparrow.
The "Vale of Soul-making"

In his letter to George and Georgiana, Keats gives a lengthy discussion on the "vale of soul-making." He writes about the three grand materials and the interaction necessary to form the soul "destined to possess the sense of Identity." And in Endymion, before he talks about the hierarchical ladder leading to happiness, Endymion mentions to Peona a "sort of oneness" and "a fellowship with essence" into which we can mingle and blend. A close reading of Keats's discussions on the "vale of soul-making" and the effort for "oneness" and "a fellowship with essence" reveals that the poet is painstakingly seeking for his poetic "Identity" through sympathetic imagination. And this is expertly explained in his letter of 27 October 1818 to Richard Wooodhouse in which Keats gives an illuminating account of the nature of creative genius:

As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself -- it has no self -- it is every thing and nothing -- It has no character -- it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated -- It has much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous
philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity -- he is continually in for -- and filling some other Body -- The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute -- the poet has none; no identity -- he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures. If then he has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the wonder that I should say I would write no more?... not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature -- how can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with People if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of everyone in the room begins to press upon me that, I am in a very little time annihilated -- not only among Men; it would be the same in a Nursery of children.... But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself; but from some character in whose soul I now live.

(Keats, Letters, I, 386-87)

Unlike the "Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime," the Keatsian poetical character..."has no self...no character...no Identity." It
is continually in and filling some other body. It relishes light and shade, fair and foul, high and low. It welcomes the bitter and the sweet with equal intensity and unrestrained gusto. The Wordsworthian poet is uniquely subjective while the Keatsian poet is objective. He can assume the character of an Iago as well as an Imogen. He does not have an identity himself; therefore, he can project his self into the "Sea," the "Moon," the "Sun," as well as "Men and Women," always "filling some other body." The Keatsian poet always stays neutral, bridging the gap between the subjective egotistical sublime and the objective things real, things semi-real, and no-things.

The Interfusion of Subjectivity

The Keatsian process of annihilating the self, aimed at dissolving the isolating boundaries between the subject and the object, the self and the non-self, is typical both of the nineteenth-century romantic and of the ancient Chinese poets. For the Romantics, "there is," as Goldberg has observed, "Walt Whitman who would embrace all and reject nothing; but here is also the single-minded Heathcliff of Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights who strikes loose the sides of Catherine’s coffin the night of her burial, and dreams ‘of dissolving with her, and being more happy still.’" For the ancient Chinese poets such as Tao Ch’ien [Tao Qian] (365-427), Li P’o [Li Bai] (701-761), and Wang Wei (701-762),
among others, the boundary between the subject and the object is dissolved through the interfusion of subjectivity, and the understanding of their poetry is an inner experience in which there is no distinction between the subject and the object. It is an intuitive, immediate awareness or "self-consciousness" rather than a mediated, inferential process such as "consecutive reasoning" (Keats, *Letters*, I, 183-87). Poetry, like Tao, does not blossom into vital consciousness until all distinctions between self and nonself have disappeared. The famous Chinese poet, T’ao Ch’ien, of the fourth century has described this experience in the following poem:

I built my hut beside a travelled road
Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.
You would like to know how it is done?
With the mind detached, one’s place becomes remote.
Picking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge
I catch sight of the distant southern hills:
The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets
And flocks of flying birds return together.
In these things is a fundamental truth
I would like to tell, but I forgot the words.

[T’ao Ch’ien [Tao Qian], 130]

In this short verse where an initial differentiation between the
seer (subject) and the things seen (objects) is immediately established, the poet looks at the landscape and sees the mountains, the birds, the flowers, and the setting sun. He forgets the words to express his feelings. He is dissolved into the objects (cause of desire) seen through his penetrating into the reality of all these things, therefore achieving a unity, a oneness with the environment. At this stage of identification between the subject and the object, the poet has "no self...[he] is everything and nothing...[he] has no character" (Keats, *Letters*, 157). He has no identity, he "enjoys light and shade...lives in gusto" (Ibid.), and he is lost in the realm of "no-words." In his comment on this poem of T’ao Ch’ien [Tao Qian], the famous eleventh-century Chinese poet, Su Tung-p’o [Su Dongpo] (1037-1101) says: "the delight of reading the poem lies in the fact that suddenly, without purpose, the poet’s mind and surroundings are unified, as he gazes at the mountains while picking flowers" (qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 20).

This inner experience of interfusion of subjectivity may also be illustrated by a typical story from the works of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi]:

Once I dreamt that I was a butterfly, fluttering here and there; in all ways a butterfly. I enjoyed my freedom as a butterfly, not knowing that I was Chou. Suddenly I awoke and was surprised to be myself again. Now, how can I tell whether I was a man who dreamt that he was a butterfly, or whether I am a butterfly who dreams that she
is a man? Between Chuang Chou and the butterfly, there must be a differentiation. [Yet in the dream nondifferentiation takes place.] This is called interfusion of things.

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. II)

In this wonderful story Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] dreams of being a butterfly himself. As the dreamer/subject, he dreams about himself as a butterfly/the object (cause of desire) in his dream. But while he awakens, he is shocked into self-consciousness that he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] again. Now he is confused about his own identity and wonders whether he is the subject who is dreaming about the butterfly/object, or it is the butterfly/subject who is dreaming about Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi]/object? It is in this "confusion" of identity that the interfusion of subject and object, and the interpenetration of self and nonself takes place, and it is also here that the mystery of Tao is unlocked, which I will deal with later on.

In The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan interprets Chuang Tzu’s [Zhuang Zi’s] dream, "the bearer of the subject’s desire," as a "screen" that shows that something traumatic "is still there behind" (Lacan, 55). This "trauma" is not interpreted in the literal sense of the word alone. It could mean a traumatic experience like suffering from traumatic experiences such as war or abuse, or it could mean the anxiety resulting from an unfulfilled wish or desire. Lacan calls this encounter with the "traumatic" the "primary scene" (Lacan, 70). This "trauma" belongs
to the realm of the real or the unconscious, and it "reappears, in effect, frequently unveiled" in its attempt to make us aware of its existence through its showing in our dreams (Ibid.). In Chuang Tzu's [Zhuang Zi's] dream, the dreamer's "desire" manifests itself in showing himself as a butterfly through metamorphosis. The "butterfly" is symbolic of the feminine, a beautiful woman. In his dreaming of being a butterfly, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] fulfils his wish of being one with the beautiful butterfly-woman through the interpenetration of self and nonself, thus revealing the essence of Tao.

The means by which the interfusion of subject and object is achieved is the "stain" in the dream picture which functions as the gaze of the Other, and makes us "beings who are looked at, but without showing this" (Lacan, 75). In the dream, the butterfly functions as the "stain" in the dream picture gazing at the dreaming viewer, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], but without showing herself as a separate being. And, as a matter of fact, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] and the butterfly are one. Furthermore, the dreamer cannot tell the difference between himself and the butterfly, for although he "does not see where it is leading, he follows. He may even on occasion detach himself, tell himself that it is a dream, but in no case will he be able to apprehend himself in the dream in the way in which, in the Cartesian cogito, he apprehends himself as thought. He may say to himself, It's only a dream. But he does not apprehend himself as someone who says to himself -- After all, I am the consciousness of this dream" (Lacan, 76).
In Chuang Tzu's [Zhuang Zi's] dream, he is a butterfly. What does this mean? In his thorough analysis of the dream, Lacan gives us the following account:

It means that he sees the butterfly in his reality as gaze. What are so many figures, so many shapes, so many colours, if not this gratuitous showing, in which is marked for us the primal nature of the essence of the gaze? Good heavens, it is a butterfly that is not very different from the one that terrorized the Wolf Man—and Maurice Merleau-Ponty is well aware of the importance of it and refers us to it in a footnote to his text. When Chuang Tzu wakes up, he may ask himself whether it is not the butterfly who dreams that he is Chuang Tzu. Indeed, he is right, and doubly so, first it proves that he is not mad, he does not regard himself as absolutely identical with Chuang Tzu and, secondly, because he does not fully understand how right he is. In fact, it is when he was the butterfly that he apprehended one of the roots of his identity— that he was, and is, in his essence, that butterfly who paints himself with his own colours— and it is because of this that, in the last resort, he is Chuang Tzu.

This is proved by the fact that, when he is the butterfly, the idea does not occur to him to wonder whether, when he is Chuang Tzu awake, he is not the butterfly that he is dreaming of being. This is because,
when dreaming of the butterfly, he will no doubt have to bear witness later that he represented himself as a butterfly. But this does not mean that he is captivated by the butterfly—he is a captive butterfly, but captured by nothing, for, in the dream, he is butterfly for nobody. It is when he is awake that he is Chuang Tzu for others, and is caught in their butterfly net.

(Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 76)

What Lacan is trying to say here is that, in the dream, there is no difference between the subject and the object. Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] and the butterfly are one. Only when he is awake, when the invasion of reality takes place, does Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] realize that he is not the butterfly but Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] for others in the "butterfly net" of the social structure.

The interfusion of subjectivity takes place at a time when all the differences between the subject and the object, being and non-being, conscious and unconscious are eliminated, and the self and nonself become one. It is in this process of interfusion of the subject and object (cause of desire), self and nonself, being and nonbeing, and the conscious and the unconscious -- the process of uniting what is separated -- that the spirit of the great Tao is revealed. Carl G. Jung, in his introduction to Richard Wilhelm's German translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, explains the essence of Tao in the light of modern psychology. He says:
If we take Tao as the method or conscious way by which to unite what is separated, we have probably come quite close to the psychological content of the concept.... Without doubt also, the question of making the opposite conscious ("conversion") means reunion with the laws of life represented in the unconscious, and the purpose of this reunion is the attainment of conscious life, or, expressed in Chinese terms, the bringing out of the Tao.

(The Secret, 95-96)

The power to reconcile opposites on a higher level of consciousness is the essence of Tao. Tao is "symbolically expressed as light in Taoism. To reconcile the polarities in order to achieve a balanced way of living and higher integration is the endeavour of psychotherapy" (Ibid.). Jung found out that the method he had applied for years in his practice coincides with the wise teaching of the ancient Taoism. He says:

My experience in my practice has been such as to reveal to me a quite new and unexpected approach to eastern wisdom. But it must be well understood that I didn't have a starting point, a more or less knowledge of Chinese philosophy .... It is only later my professional experiences have shown me that in my technique I have been unconsciously led along the secret way which for centuries has been the preoccupation of the best minds of the East.
What is the preoccupation of this Eastern mind? Jung puts it thus:

Because the things of the inner world influence us all the more powerfully for being unconscious it is essential for anyone who intends to make progress in self-culture to objectivate the effects of the anima and then try to understand what contents underlie those effects. In this way he adapts to, and is protected against, the invisible. No adaptation can result without concessions to both worlds.

From a consideration of the claims of the inner and outer worlds, or rather, from the conflicts between them, the possible and the necessary follows. Unfortunately our Western mind, lacking all culture in this respect, has never yet devised a concept, nor even a name, for the union of opposites through the middle path [my emphasis], that most fundamental item of inward experience, which could respectably be set against the Chinese concept of Tao.

(Collected Works, Vol. III, 203)

In his comment on Jung's comparison of Tao with modern psychology, Chang says: "Never before has Chinese Taoism been so well explained in the light of modern psychology and sincerely pursued as a way to elevate man's mental activities and alleviate his
sufferings. Thus the mystery of age-old Eastern wisdom, which brings out the best in man, is no longer a mystery but simply a way to wholesome and harmonious living" (Chang, 6). Both Jung and Chang are absolutely right. Looking back on the long history of China with sufferings, wars, power struggles, and political campaigns, one can easily realize that Tao "as a way to wholesome and harmonious living" really provided the Chinese with a means of attaining the higher reality or the world of non-being for serenity and non-action. For according to the Taoist, the world is a world of Yin and Yang. But, unlike the ancient Greek philosophical notion of dualism, the Taoist dualisms are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are mutually exchangeable. As the I Ching says, when Yang grows old, it changes into Yin (see Diagram I attached), and vice versa. It is through this interfusion, interpenetration of things, the opposites are united as one.

A

The Mystery of Tao

Chinese philosophy saw its dawn after the fall of the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th - 11th century B.C.), the era of bronze and oracle bones, and the beginning of the great Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century - 256 B.C.). The people of Zhou knew the deep secret of the universe, that Yang and Yin are at the root of all things, and the continual interchange of Yin and Yang gives motion to the world. This is explained in the I Ching, the Canon of Change.
The underlying idea of *I Ching* is the binary nature of things: there are always two basic attributes lying at the root of all things, namely, Yin and Yang. Yin is passive, yielding, and nurturing, while Yang is active, dominating, and creative. In his interpretation of Yin and Yang, Cooper says that "these were originally topographical terms, like 'shine' and 'shade': Yang for the south side of a hill, the north bank of a river, the sun itself, and the male sex, among other things; and Yin for the north side of a hill, the south bank of a river, the moon and planets that reflect the sun's light, and the female sex, among other things" (Cooper, 15). In the book of *I Ching*, Yin is symbolically represented by a broken line whereas Yang is represented by a solid line (also see Diagram I attached):

```
YIN

YANG
```

Because of the changing nature of all things, Yin and Yang change into each other continually. When Yin "grows old," it changes into Yang, and vice versa. The constant changing into each other of Yin and Yang was held to be the moving force of our universe and all its manifestations, whether social, political, philosophical, economical, or psychological, and the unceasing alternation between Yin and Yang that makes the world go round was also said to be the inspiration for a life in harmony with Nature. Therefore, ancient
Chinese thinking was based on the assumption of such a harmonious balance of Yin and Yang, which was part of the great Way, Tao in Chinese, of Nature, of which man himself in all his activities was an inseparable part; and this single Tao includes both natural science and moral philosophy.

However, there were two ways of imagining this great Tao: the Yin Way and the Yang Way. The former was represented by the Taoist school of thought, while the latter was represented by the Confucian school of thought. For Confucius (551-479 B.C.), the leading ancient sage of China, Tao was something that was a source of ethics that could be illumined for the benefit of the individual, social morality, and good government. But for the legendary ancient Taoist sage, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], a man some twenty years older than Confucius, Tao was not something that could be learned by arguing about it. Tao is inexpressible, and the Taoist teaching must be "without words," even though the Taoists might use as many words as did the Confucians in expounding their philosophy for the best government to be the least government "without action."

Tao is nameless, indistinct, and ineffable, but latent in it are forms and objects. Tao is the beginning of Heaven and Earth, and the Mother of all things. Nothing in the world is but the manifestation of the "countenance of the Great Achievement" of which Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] speaks in the Tao Te Ching:

The countenance of the Great Achievement
is simply a manifestation of Tao.

That which is called Tao
is indistinct and ineffable.

Ineffable and indistinct,
yet therein are forms.

Indistinct and ineffable,
yet therein are objects.

Deep seated and unseen,
therein are essences.

The essence is quite real
therein is the vivid Truth.

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Ch. XXI)

In 1816, when Hegel was lecturing at Heidelberg on Taoism, Confucianism, and the philosophy found in the I Ching, he made the following remarks on Taoism:

We still have his [Lao Tzu's] principal writings; they are available in Vienna and I have seen them myself. One special passage is frequently quoted from them: 'The nameless Tao is the beginning of Heaven and Earth; with a name Tao is the Mother of the Universe (All Things)...To the Chinese what is highest, the origin of things, is nothingness, emptiness, the altogether undetermined, the abstract universal, and this is also called Tao...

(Hegel, Lecture on the History, Vol. I, 125)

84
In his lecture, Hegel also compares Taoism with Greek thinking:

    When the Greeks say that the absolute is one, when men in modern times say that it is the highest existence, all determinations are abolished, and by the merely abstract Being nothing has been expressed except this same negation, only in the affirmative form.

    (Ibid.)

From this comparison between Taoism and the Greek notion that "the absolute is One," we can see what Hegel is driving at: Tao is One, and One is Tao. The Greek synthesis of the existence of Being as One is similar to that of the Taoist in that both assert nothing and negate nothing; for in negation there is affirmation, and vice versa. And the two fuse into One. Chuang Tzu says:

    Affirmation arises from negation, and negation from affirmation. Therefore, the sage disregards all distinctions and takes his point of view from Heaven. The 'this' is also 'that,' and 'that' is also 'this.' 'This' has its right and wrong and 'that' also has its right and wrong. Is there really a distinction between 'this' and 'that'? Not to determine 'this' and 'that' as opposites is the very essence of Tao. ... Affirmation and negation alike blend into the infinite One. Hence it is said there is nothing better than to see things through the light.

85
In identifying the opposites of things through the light is to enter into the unity of all things; and in this unity, everything breaks through the shell of itself and interfuses with every other thing. Through this identification of the one with the other, one becomes many and many become one. "In this realm," as Chang says, "all selves dissolve into one, all our selves are selves only to the extent that they disappear into all other selves. Each individual merges into every other individual. Here we have entered the realm of nonbeing. The dissolution of self and the interfusion among all individuals, which takes place upon entry into this realm of nonbeing, constitute the metaphysical structure of sympathy" (Chang, 37). This is best illustrated by Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] when he compares the human body to its inseparable parts such as the bones, external cavities, and internal organs, which exist through their complete integration. He says:

Take for instance a human body consisting of a hundred bones, nine external cavities and six internal organs, all of which exist through their complete integration. May I ask which of them I should favour most? Should I not favour them all equally? Or should I favour only one in particular? Are all these organs subordinates of a power apart from themselves? As subordinates cannot govern themselves, do they rather alternate as master and
subordinates? Is there not something real that exists through their own integration?

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. II).

The co-existence, the interfusion, and interpenetration of dualities and multiplicities depend on the spirit of sympathy, which Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] calls "something real," and which is the primary moving force of the universe. The ground of this "something real" is the realm of nonbeing, nonaction, which are similar to Keats's notion of "selfless" identity, "passiveness," or "indolence" respectively.

In his expounding of Buddhism in terms of Taoism, Seng-Chao (384-414), student and fellow worker of the great Indian teacher of Buddhism, Kumarajiva, maintains that "action and nonaction are not isolated, but coalescent. Things in action are simultaneously forever in nonaction; things in nonaction are forever in action. Thus nonaction does not mean quiescence after action has ceased, but quiescence forever in action" (qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 11).

In "The Identity of All Things," Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] identifies action with nonaction by saying: "This is also that, and that is also this," and "Destruction is construction; construction is destruction. There is no destruction or construction. They fuse into one." When we do not assert this or that, we are free from both. We are simply following the Middle Path, which is the same concept that Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] refers to when he says, "Being and nonbeing create each other," and "The
wise follow the path of nonassertion and teach without words" (Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Ch. II).

In the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] identifies Tao as the One that is invisible, inaudible, unfathomable. This great One embraces past and present, form and formlessness, being and nonbeing. Therefore, the One is unification of duality and multiplicity. It is infinite, unceasing, and without opposite. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] says:

That which you look at but cannot see
Is called the invisible.
That which you listen to but cannot hear
Is called the inaudible.
That which you grasp but cannot hold
Is called the unfathomable.

None of these three can be inquired after,
Hence they blend into one.
Above no light can make it lighter,
Beneath no darkness can make it darker.

Unceasingly it continues
But it is impossible to be defined.
Again it returns to nothingness.

Thus it is described as the form of the formless,
The image of the imageless.
Hence it is called the Evasive.

It is met with but no one sees its face;
It is followed but no one sees its back.

To hold to the Tao of old,
To deal with the affairs at hand,
In order to understand the primordial beginnings,
That is called the rule of Tao.

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Ch. XIV)

The Taoist universe is a universe of dualities and multiplicities. We have the Yin and Yang, black and white, high and low, great and small, right and wrong, positive and passive, and an infinite number of dualities. Can we really draw any real distinctions within these dualities? Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] gives the following answer: "Because a thing is greater than other things we call it great; then all things in the world are great. Because a thing is smaller than other things we call it small; and then all things in the world are small." From this we can see that there is no real distinction within the dualities. Everything follows the law of relativity. Like Yin and Yang, once Yin "grows old," it changes into Yang, and vice versa. Everything in the world is subject to change. The Chinese have the saying that the mountain may not move, but the water flows. A tree may be tall, but it is shorter than
another one and yet taller than a third one. Therefore, the tree embraces the opposed qualities of tallness and shortness. It is always in the Middle Path.

To give more extreme instances of dualities, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] says: "There is nothing in the world greater than the tip of a hair, while the Mountain Tai is small. Neither is there any life longer than that of a child cut off in infancy, while P'eng Tzu [the Methuselah of China, who, according to tradition, lived eight hundred years] died young" (Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. 6). The Taoist synthesis of opposites is similar to what Hegel calls the "identity-in-difference." A is A, but at the same time A is not A. In the words of Chuang Tzu: "That which is One is One. That which is not One is also One" (Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. VI).

There were also logicians, at the time of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], who attained the same kind of synthesis of opposites through logical analysis. The typical representatives of this school of logicians were Hui Shih [Hui Shi] and Kung-sun Lung. Among their formulations we find: "There is a point of time when the head of a flying arrow neither moves nor stops." "One starts out of Yueh (in South China) today and arrives there yesterday." "Take a stick one foot long and cut it in half every day and you will never come to the end, even after ten thousand years." What these logicians are doing is to emphasize the self-so-ness of things. As Chang comments, "A stick in reality is what it is. It cannot be identified by the relative value of either long or short. To realize the self-so-ness of the stick is the essence of Tao"
Such Taoist synthesis through logical analysis is also similar to the approach of the first proper Greek philosopher, Parmenides, who asserted the sole existence of Being as One. What interests me here are the paradoxes by means of which Zeno, his disciple, tried to prove his master's hypothesis of the existence of multitude and movement a contrario. In "The Literary Technique of Zeno's Paradoxes," Jean-Claude Milner gives a brilliant account of all four of the paradoxes by means of which Zeno tried to prove the impossibility of movement (Milner, 45). The first and the best known of Zeno's paradoxes is the one about Achilles and the tortoise, which is a condensation of two literary models: the story of Achilles and Hector in the Iliad and Aesop's fable about the hare and the tortoise. Zeno's first literary reference is to the following lines from the Iliad: "As in a dream, the pursuer never succeeds in catching up with the fugitive whom he is after, and the fugitive likewise cannot ever clearly escape his pursuer so Achilles that day did not succeed in attaining Hector, and Hector was not able to escape him definitely" (Iliad, XXII, 199-200). As in Aesop's fable, neither can the hare catch up with the tortoise nor can the tortoise escape the hare because the hare is either too fast or too slow. What is of interest to us here is not the way in
which Zeno renders visible aspects that would otherwise remain unnoticed but the relationship between the subject and the object/cause of its desire, which can never be attained. As in a dream, the subject is always either too fast or too slow in his continuous pursuit of the object. The moment the subject approaches the object, it runs away, therefore preserving a constant distance. The object of desire is always missed and eludes our grasp no matter what we do to attain it. All we can do is to encircle it. This paradox of Zeno's inaccessibility of the object "was nicely indicated by Lacan," Zizek says, "when he stressed that the point is not that Achilles could not overtake Hector (or the tortoise)—since he is faster than Hector, he can easily leave him behind—but rather that he cannot attain him: Hector is always too fast or too slow. There is a clear parallel here with the well-known paradox of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*: do not run after luck too arduously, because it might happen that you will overrun it and that luck will thus stay behind" (Zizek, *Looking Awry*, 4). Like Tao, this object of our desire is "evasive" (Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Ch. XIV); we can never attain it. All we can do is encircle it.

The second paradox of Zeno is the arrow that cannot move because at any given time it occupies a definite point in space. The literary reference is a scene from the *Odyssey*, book XI. Here Heracles is continually shooting an arrow from his bow. No matter how many times he shoots, the arrow remains motionless. Odysseus saw the phantom of Heracles: "Around this phantom the ghosts were gibbering and twittering like a flock of birds, and scattering
hither and thither; he stood holding his naked bow with arrow on string, looking as black as night, and casting dreadful glances round, for ever as if about to shoot" (The Odyssey, Ch. XI, 127). It is almost needless to say how this "unmoving movement" resembles the Taoist logicians' "head of a flying arrow [that] neither moves nor stops"; and it is also "almost superfluous to recall how this resembles the well-known dream experience of 'moving immobility': in spite of all our frenetic activity, we are stuck in the same place" (Zizek, Looking Awry, 5). The crucial thing for us to notice in this scene with Heracles is its location--Hades--where Odysseus encounters a series of suffering figures such as Tantalus and Sisyphus, among others, who are condemned to repeat the same act indefinitely. In The Odyssey, Odysseus says: "Tantalus also I saw in his misery, standing in a lake up to his chin, always thirsty, but try as he would, not a drop could he lap up: for as often as the poor old man dipped his head to take a drink, the water was sucked back and disappeared, until the dark earth showed under his feet as fate dried it away. Tall trees in full leaf dangled their fruit over his head, pears and pomegranates and fine juicy apples, sweet figs and ripe olives; but as often as the poor old man reached out a hand to catch one, the wind tossed them all up to the clouds" (The Odyssey, Ch. XI, 127).

It is obvious that the libidinal economy of Tantalus's torment exemplifies, as Zizek points out, "the Lacanian distinction between need, demand, and desire, that is, the way an everyday object destined to satisfy some of our needs undergoes a kind of
transubstantiation as soon as it is caught in the dialect of demand and ends up producing desire. When we demand an object from somebody, its 'use value' (the fact that it serves to satisfy some of our needs) eo ipso becomes a form of expression of its 'exchange value'; the object in question functions as an index of a network of intersubjective relations. If the other complies with our wish, he thereby bears witness to a certain attitude towards us. The final purpose of our demand for an object is thus not the satisfaction of a need attached to it but confirmation of the other's attitude toward us....The poor Tantalus thus pays for his greed (his striving after 'exchange value') when every object he attains loses its 'use value' and changes into a pure, useless embodiment of 'exchange value': the moment he bites into food, it changes to gold" (Zizek, Looking Awry, 5). And the tragedy of Tantalus is obviously that he does not realize the impossibility of the relationship between the subject and the object/cause of its desire: the moment the subject approaches the object, it transubstantiates -- it changes into something new.

Like the Tao, this something we are after is always elusive and ungraspable. There was a story of a man named Tung Kuo Tzu [Dong Guozi] who wanted to follow the Tao. One day, he asked Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] where the Tao is:

Tung Kuo Tzu asked Chuang Tzu: "Where is this which you call Tao?" "Everywhere," Chuang Tzu replied. "Where specifically?" insisted Tung Kuo Tzu. "It is in the ant,"
Chuang Tzu answered. "How can it be so low?" "It is in the earthware tiles." "Still worse." "It is in excrement." To this Tung Kuo Tzu did not answer. Chuang Tzu proceeded to explain himself, "Your questions did not go to the heart of Tao. You must not ask for the specification of particular things in which Tao exists. There is no single thing without Tao!"

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. XXII)

Tung Kuo Tzu [Dong Guozi] and Tantalus make the same mistake by asking for the "specifications of particular things"; for nothing is tangible. What we are driving at in life is not really something that is attainable but rather something beyond our grasp; and what we end up doing is just like Tantalus: repeating the same action to reproduce our drive to satisfy our desire.

The third paradox of Zeno, according to Milner, is based on Sisyphus's continuous pushing of the stone up the hill only to have it roll down again. In The Odyssey, Sisyphus "held up a monstrous stone with both hands. Scrambling with his feet, and pushing with his hands, he heaved the stone up the hill; but just as he was about to topple it over the crest, the weight was too much for him, and turned it back: down-along to the ground rolled the stone pitiless. Then he would push again, stretching and struggling, with sweat pouring off every limb and dust rising from his head" (The Odyssey, 127). What Zeno tries to prove here is that a given distance X can never be covered because, in order to do so, we must
cover the first half of the distance, and half of the half, and so on, ad infinitum. This is, of course, very much similar to the Taoist logician's notion that "Take a stick one foot long and cut it in half every day and you will never come to the end, even after ten thousand years." In Lacanian terms, Sisyphus's continuous pushing of the stone up the hill only to have it roll down again serves to prove the notion that a goal, once reached, always retreats anew; and what we end up doing is but the simple process of reproducing the **drive** to repeat the act. Lacan draws a distinction between **aim** and **goal**: the goal is the final destination, while the aim is the way itself. The purpose of the drive is not to reach the destination (full satisfaction) but what we intend to do. In other words, the ultimate aim of drive is simply to reproduce itself as drive, to repeat the act of going back and forth within this closed circuit. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan says:

> When you entrust someone with a mission, the **aim** is not what he brings back, but the itinerary he must take. The **aim** is the way taken....If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point of view of a biological totalization of function, would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its **aim** is simply this return into circuit.

*(Lacan, *The Four Fundamental*, 179)*
Therefore, we can see that the real source of enjoyment of Sisyphus is the repetition of movement: once he reaches his goal, he experiences the fact that the real aim of his activity is the way itself, the pushing of the stone up the hill and having it roll down again.

The last of Zeno's paradoxes is that when two equal masses move in opposite directions, half of a certain amount of time equals its double amount. Is this not similar to the Taoist synthesis of opposites? As Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] says: "That which is one is one, and that which is not-one is also one." Like Hegel's "identity-in-difference," that is, A is A, but at the same time A is not A, the Taoist one is one, but at the same time one is not-one, which means nonbeing, or Wu in Chinese, which is also identified with the ultimate. Because it is the origin of all things, it is called Tao. The libidinal economy of this nonbeing preconditions the possibility of being. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] presents a very simple explanation of this nonbeing and wholeness:

Thirty spokes joined at the hub.
From their nonbeing
Comes the function of the wheel.

Shape clay into a vessel.
From its nonbeing
Comes the function of the vessel.

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Ch. XI)
To put Lao Tzu's teaching in simple words, nonbeing creates being: we are what we are not. Zizek also give a very convincing example of this paradoxical experience of an increase in the libidinal impact of a something that is non-existent whenever efforts are made to diminish or destroy it. Let us revisit the quandary of the Nazis: "Consider the way the figure of the Jews functioned in Nazi discourse: the more they were exterminated, eliminated, the fewer their numbers, the more dangerous their remainder became, as if their threat grew in proportion to their diminution in reality. This is again an exemplary case of the subject's relation to the horrifying object that embodies its surplus enjoyment: the more we fight against it, the more its power over us grows" (Zizek, *Looking Awry*, 6).

To conclude, all four of Zeno's paradoxes are intended to prove the "impossibility of movement" and consequently the nonexistence of movement and multitude. They demonstrate, however, that because of the impossible relation of the subject to the object (cause of its desire), the domain of the drive that circulates endlessly around it, the sole existence of Being as the One of the first proper philosopher, Parmenides, asserts itself. And perhaps this is what Lacan meant when he said that the object small a "is what philosophical reflection lacks in order to be able to locate itself, that is, to ascertain its nullity" (Lacan, *Cahiers*, 7).
Lacan's "Objet Petit a" is similar to what Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] calls Tao, the mother of the world. This great Tao is all-pervading, all embracing, and unceasing. Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] calls this the grand interfusion, Ta T'ung [Da Tong], the realm of which is free from any determination and contradiction, and this realm of nonbeing is beyond the reach of any logical thinking. In this realm, there is neither space nor time; it is infinite. As Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] describes it: "Being is without dwelling space. Continuity is without duration. Being without dwelling place is space. Continuity without duration is time. There is birth, there is death, there is issuing forth, there is entering in. That through which one passes in and out without seeing its form is the Gate of Heaven. The Gate of Heaven is nonbeing. All things spring from nonbeing" (Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. XXXIII). The realm of nonbeing is absolutely free from any limitations or distinctions. Therefore, it is the unity of all things, and the ground of the great sympathy. This nonbeing has two manifestations: "Ming, or light, and P'o, the uncarved block or original simplicity." Through interfusion they flow into one another. As Chang comments, "from the ordinary point of view they are separated as two, but from the Taoist point of view they are conceived as one. They both lead to the great sympathy and are identified with it" (Chang, 36).

In this realm of nonbeing, the one becomes many and many become
one. There is no self because all our selves dissolve into the
other selves, and this dissolution of self and interfusion among
all individuals form the ground of great sympathy, which is the
primary moving force of the universe. To live in this world of
nonbeing one has to get rid of his ego-conscious self and become
one with the world of the unknown, the world of knowledge of no-
knowledge. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] says:

To reveal Simplicity and to hold the Uncarved Block,
To restrain selfishness and to curtail desires,
To give up learning and to stop worries.
How much difference is there between the politeness
of "wei" and the rudeness of "O"?
How much difference is there between goodness
and badness?
"Where others are afraid I must be afraid, too," is
extremely ridiculous!
The people are gay as if enjoying a banquet and
mounting a tower in spring.
I alone, quiet, and unmoved, as a babe unable yet
to smile, am unattached, depending on nothing.

People all have more than enough;
I alone seem to have nothing left.
So ignorant! My mind must be that of a dolt.
People are bright and shine;
I alone am dark and dull.
People are clever and distinctive;
I alone am obscure and blunt.
Desolate, as if in the dark,
Quiet as if concentrating on nothing.
People all have purpose and usefulness;
But I alone am ignorant and uncouth.
I am different from all others, but I draw nourishment from the Mother.

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Chs. XIX and XX)

What Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] is saying is that, in the realm of nonbeing, one is selfless when he is transformed and is at one with dualities and multiplicities. He has no identity; he lives within the other bodies; and he becomes part of the moving force of the universe.

Keats: the "annulling self"

In the Taoist realm of nonbeing from where the great sympathy flows, the self becomes selfless and being becomes nonbeing through interfusion and interpenetration between the universe and all things. Similarly, in the poetical world of John Keats, the poet has no self, no identity: "the camelion Poet... is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no identity -- he is continually in for -- and filling some other Body -- The Sun,
the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute -- the poet has none; no identity..." (Keats, Letters, 157). Through the power of sympathetic imagination which allows him to project his feelings into the subject he describes or imagines, the Keatsian poet changes his identity with it (such as a sparrow); therefore, he is left with no identity of his own.

In his discussion of Keats's recurrent wish for an "annulling self," John Barnard writes about Keats's letter on the vale of soul-making in which Keats talks about a "rose...[with] sensation," a rose capable of self-awareness and of enjoying itself (Keats, Letters, II,102):

This gives the basis for the characteristic tactile, visual and auditory effects in the poetry, and the preference for metaphors of fullness, of a selfhood bursting with its own identity. Sensation is then linked with Keatsian empathy. Being taken up into sensation, into something deeply other to the self, takes Keats a long way from simple sense experience ... the imaginative experience, but its meaning went beyond mere day-dreaming. It was in fact a kind of thinking through images.

(Barnard, 52)

Keats's "thinking through images" is tied to an imaginary identification of the self with the other, the object imagined or
described. Through this interfusion of the subject and the object/cause of its desire -- a process of imagining himself into an object, or of contemplating himself objectively, the poet achieves a oneness with it.

Keats's ability to unify what is separated is best demonstrated in synaesthesia and in empathy. In his introduction to the Selected Poetry and Letters of John Keats, Fogle gives an expert analysis of these two terms in regard to Keats's poetry. He takes them as a "nonlogical but poetic way of thinking" (Fogle, xi). He says:

Synaesthesia is either a transference or a fusion that relates different modes of sense experience; it finds analogies, for example, between colour and sound, sound and odour, odour and colour, sound and touch. We talk naturally of warm and cool colours, dark tones, and heavy odours. The effect of poetic synaesthesia may emphasize either the transference of senses or their fusion. In Keats it acts chiefly to fuse and unify.

(Fogle, xii)

Like the great Tao, synaesthesia is a means by which subject and object are united, and the opposites fuse into one. By contrast, poetic empathy is a "way of thinking in which the poet seems to project himself into and identify himself with his subject" (Fogle, xiii). Through empathy the poet is capable of giving life and meaning to bodies and form. The Keatsian poet is "the most
unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no identity -- he is continually ... filling some other body" and is decidedly empathic. He forgets himself in intense imagination and projects himself into alien modes of being; thus interfusion of vision and reality takes place, and the familiar contrasts of human experience can no longer be drawn. "...If a Sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel." Keats declared that he could enter into the life a rose and the feelings of a billiard ball! Keats's ability to identify himselfimaginatively with the object described is best demonstrated in passages of the greatest intensity and concentration in his poetry.

In Endymion, this process of annihilating the self, aimed at dissolving the isolating boundaries between self and the external world, is typical in the following passage where the poet is totally dissolved into the ocean. The old ocean and the poet have become one: the poet moves and heaves with it:

...as when heav'd anew
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,
Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar,
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.[my emphasis]
(Endymion, II, 347-350)

Here Keats's empathy is shown through the interfusion of the poet's emotions with the movement of the "old ocean," thus dissolving the boundaries of both time and space. Like the Taoist poet, Tao Ch'ien
[Tao Qian], who is lost in the realm of "no words" while picking flowers in the mountain, the Keatsian poet is lost in the world of the "old ocean" where the differentiation between the two -- the subject and the object -- no longer exists. In his comment on this passage, Fogle says, "Here a sense of slow and even movement comes first. A rhythmical rising and falling begins with 'heav'd.' The repeated o's in 'Old ocean rolls' unite with 'lengthened' to suggest the glide of the single wave. Within this wave itself there are two planes of motion: the 'gradual' bursting of the foam, as well as the forward roll. 'Gradual' is modified and particularized by the noteworthy 'wayward,' and 'indolence,' the key to the passage, has now been fully prepared for. The undercurrent of personification in 'short-liv'd,' 'back,' and 'hoar' heightens the empathic identification and feeling" (Fogle, xiv).

In Hyperion, Keats describes the two defeated Titans with an almost purely objective picture of both their strength and despair:

Creus was one; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pin'd.
Iapetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
These concrete images of the "ponderous iron mace," the "shatter'd rib of rock," and the "plashy neck" are typical examples of Keats's fusion of poetry with painting and sculpture: "the suspension of movement at a pregnant moment" (Hirst, 29). Here the poet gives life to form through the interfusion of emotion and physical force.

In "Ozymandias," Shelley uses the same kind of technique:

...Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the Desart. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

(Shelley, 32)

The difference between Keats and Shelley here is that the former creates a picture out of his own imagination while the latter

106
creates a picture after a specific statue of the "king of kings," Ozymandias. In other words, Keats's picture is original whereas Shelley's is an "imitation of an imitation," for the hand of the sculptor that "mocked" the vile passions of the king's features and the heart of Ozymandias that "fed" them in life are recaptured in his poem-picture where the pride and the cruelty of the king are shown to the scrutiny of the reader-viewer.

This ability to enter into a world other than our own is the spirit of Tao. In The Old Book of Tang, Li P'o [Li Bai] (A.D. 701-761) was said to have this ability to enter into his dream world of imagination. He "possessed a superior talent, a great and tameless spirit, and fantastical ways of the transcendent mind" (Li-P'o: the Chinese Poet, 19). In our modern sense, Li P'o [Li Bai] was a romanticist. Like Wordsworth, he loved hills and lakes and was enamoured of solitude and tranquillity in nature. "To him," Obata says, "the cloud-girt peak of Luh Shan [Mountains], or the hollow glen of autumn, was not a temple but a home where he felt most at ease and free to do as he pleased -- where he drank, sang, slept, and meditated" (Li-P'o, 19). His intimate feeling of Nature gained him admission to a world other than his own, and his poems are the spontaneous utterances of his soul in response to the sweet song of a mongo bird or the call of far waterfalls:

Why do I live in the green mountains?
I laugh and answer not. My soul is serene.
It dwells in another heaven and earth
belonging to no man --
The peach trees are in flower, and
the water flows on ...

(Li-P’o, 73)

Li P’o [Li Bai] was a Taoist. At the age of fifteen, he sought Gods and goblins. The older he grew, the stronger became the hold of Taoism on his mind. He used to be a court poet. After years of service, he got tired of the court and left with the King’s permission to pursue his own dreams. The first thing he did after he left the court was to go to Chinan-fu and receive the Taoist diploma from the high priest of the sect, "wishing only (says Li Yang-ping) to return east to Peng-lai and with the winged men ride to the Scarlet Hill of Immortality" (Li-P’o, 20). Peng-lai is the paradise of the Taoist; it is said to be somewhere in the eastern sea. The poetry of Li P’o [Li Bai] reflects the gleams of such a visionary paradisal land. His dream poem, "Dream of the Sky-land," rivals Kubla Khan in its transcendent beauty and imaginative power and is also a typical Taoist vision:

The seafarers tell of the Eastern Isle of Bliss
It is lost in a wilderness of misty sea waves.

But the sky-land of the south, the Yueh-landers say,
May be seen through cracks of the glimmering cloud.
This land of the sky stretches across the leagues of heaven;
It rises above the Five Mountains and towers over the Scarlet Castle,
While, as if staggering before it, the Tien-tai Peak
Of forty-eight thousand feet leans toward the southeast.

So, longing to dream of the southlands of Wu and Yueh,
I flew across the Mirror Lake one night under the moon.

The moon in the lake followed my flight,
Followed me to the town of Yen-chi.
Here still stands the mansion of Prince Hsieh.
I saw the green waters curl and heard the monkey’s shrill cries.
I climbed, putting on the clogs of the prince,
Skyward on a ladder of clouds,
And half-way up from the sky-wall I saw the morning sun,
And heard the heaven’s cock crowing in the mid-air.

(Li-P’o: the Chinese Poet, 117)

The constantly recurring symbol in Li P’o’s [Li Bai’s] poetry is the reflected light of the Moon at night; thus, he has often been accused of being an escapist like the English Romanticists. But, "he has helped," Cooper says in his introduction to Li P’o and Tu
Fu, "provide the healing of escape to his countrymen for twelve centuries; sometimes making them forget their problems in unthinking gaiety, but still more making them feel (by stimulating, as it were, their peripheral rather than their direct vision) that there is infinitely more in the Universe than what is worrying them, or than they can see directly and understand" (Li P’o and Tu Fu, 19).

Like Li P’o [Li Bai], John Keats is also a dream poet. It is needless to say that the moon is also a recurring symbol in his poetry. Beside the most typical example of Endymion, the symbol of the moon appears in almost all the major poems such as Isabella, Lamia, Hyperion, and "The Eve of St. Agnes." Like the Taoist poet, Li P’o [Li Bai], Keats has no identity himself; he can all the more project his self into the sea, the moon, the sun, as well as men and women, always "filling some other Body." In Lamia, this process of annihilating the self is typified by Lycius’s dreaming of dissolving with Lamia, the serpent Woman:

Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?

(Keats, 352)
In the sonnet to Reynolds, Keats longs for the annihilation of time and space: a week might stretch into an age, a single year into a thousand so as to prolong the moment of meeting and parting:

O that a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week;
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek.
So could we live long life in little space,
So time itself would be annihilate ... 

(Keats, 182)

In "On a Dream," the poet, being so charmed and so conquered after reading the Paolo and Francesca episode, projects his subjective feelings into the objective reality so as to produce such a sense of directness that he himself is enabled to see and kiss the "sweet lips":

But to that second circle of sad Hell, 
Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw 
Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell 
Their sorrows -- pale were the sweet lips I saw, 
Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form 
I floated with, about that melancholy storm. 

(John Keats, 236)
In the dissolution of isolating boundaries between the self and the nonself, here the reader is directly confronted with the objective reality the poet originally faced. The reader can experience what the poet has experienced. The subjectivity of the reader and the objective reality in the poem fuse into one without any mediation or interference by the poet.

The fusion of subject and object is what the Chinese critics call the principle of directness. In *Criticism of Poetry in the Mundane World*, the famous Chinese literary critic, Wang Kuo-wei says:

The poems written by T'ao Ch'ien (373-427) and Hsieh Ling-yun (385-433) give the impression of directness. The poems by Li Yen-nien sometimes not ....

The idea of directness can be illustrated by the following line: "Around the pond April grass is growing," or "Under the beam the swallow's nest is empty, from it the clay is dropping." The effectiveness of these lines is brought about by the subtlety of directness.

(qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 175)

Here the pond with April grass, the deserted nest of the swallow, and the clay falling all function as symbols that are presented to the reader without any comment or interpretation by the poet; therefore, the reader is free to respond to them. Chang says, "The objective reality of the poem speaks directly to the innermost
being of the reader. There is no attempt to impose any specific ideas upon the reader's conscious mind. Rather, his mind is allowed to react freely and spontaneously" (Chang, 175). This annihilating process, aimed at dissolving the boundaries between the subject and the object, self and the external universe establishes an immediacy between the reader and the poem. Maritain says:

Such poems are condensed, the expression is purely restricted to the essentials, any discursive or oratorical development and liaison has been replaced by allusive streaks. But they are clear poems ... the intelligible sense, although still explicit, is, as it were, not circumscribed, I would say, open.

(Maritain, 196)

To eliminate the intermediary of the poet is to allow the reader to face the objective reality in the poem so that he, like the poet, can penetrate into the essence of things and reveal their true nature. As Macleish says, "A poem should not mean, but be!" (Maritain, 176). This is typical of the best works of Chinese poetry. In the following poems by Yang Kwang [Yang Guang] and Wang Wei, the spiritual rhythm emerges from the objective reality: they do not "mean"; they "are":

In Spring when all the flowers are in bloom,
The evening river appears smooth and motionless.
Suddenly the tide water comes with the reflection of glittering stars; The ebbing waves carry away the image of the moon.

Yang Kwang

In quiescence I hear the cinnamon blossoms fall. When the night had come, the Spring mountains are silent. Suddenly the moon appears from behind the clouds and startles the young birds; By the mountain stream they chirp and chirp.

Wang Wei

(qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 175)

The flowing stream and the shining moon in the above poems bring the reader in direct contact with the objective reality of the scenes. Here the reader and the poem are not brought together through "consecutive reasoning" but through the spiritual rhythm "flowing back and forth between the objective reality of the picture and the subjective reality of the beholder. The inexpressible flux between the two poles is not subject to the artificiality of external rules. When the poet is free from artificiality he will not only reflect pure objective reality, he will also be able to reflect spontaneously his inner joy without distortion and limitations from the ego-consciousness" (Chang, 177).
In the "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats gives us the clearest example of this process of dissolving the isolating boundaries between the subjectivity of the poet and the objective reality of the poem. Through this annihilating process the poet is able to identify himself imaginatively with the object described. Being so obsessed with the disparity between his own drugged senses and the "full-throated ease" of this light-winged Dryad, the poet yearns "for a beaker full of the warm south" and becomes one with the "winking" wine through the interfusion of the subject and the object/cause of its desire. This is exemplified in the second stanza of the Nightingale ode:

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim ...

(Keats, 280)

This dissolution of the spatial barriers separating the poet and the nightingale is achieved through the use of "hemlock" and
vintage "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim." Similarly, the Taoist poet, Li P’o [Li Bai], who was notorious for his drunkenness, also used "vintage" to help him to get into "a state of perfect, untrammeled receptivity to divine inspiration" (Li P’o and Tu Fu, 25) when he wrote poetry. But sensation induced by intoxicants alone cannot prolong the moment of nondifferentiation. Therefore, the poet resorts to his own creativity to be charioted by the "viewless wings of Poesy":

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
   Not charioted by Bacchus and pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
   Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
   And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
   Cluster’d around by all her starry Fays;
   But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
   Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.
   (Keats, 280)

In the second stanza, through the use of intoxicants, the poet wishes to "fade away into the forest dim" with the immortal songster. But he realizes that the ease from the numbness of the senses is unreliable. Only the sympathetic imagination can enable him to "fly to" the bird with the help of the "viewless wings of
Poesy." Once he is united with the nightingale -- "Already with thee" -- time and space are annihilated; thus, the poet enters into the magic realm of "Queen-Moon," and "starry Fays," or "easeful Death" -- the journey's destination in the realm of the immortals and unconsciousness, the home of the nightingale. In his comment on Keats's quest for permanence and a changeless world in contrast to our mundane world "where men sit and hear each other groan;/Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,/Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;/Where but to think is to be full of sorrow/ And leaden-eyed despairs" (Keats, 280), Goldberg says that "Almost at once, the pursuer leaps forward to merge with the pursued. Not space alone, but time is annihilated. Out of their passing night of 'leaden-eyed despairs,' he somehow leaps into a changeless world. 'Though the dull brain perplexes,' a mystical merging of the two singers seems almost complete, as he begins to call jubilantly to the invisible songster, 'Already with thee!'" (Goldberg, 93).

Like the Chinese poet, Li P'o [Li Bai], Keats was always conscious of his mortality. As I have mentioned above, Li P'o [Li Bai] yearned for immortality and had always wanted to be with the immortals. After he became tired of life in the court, his only wish was to go to "Peng-lai and with the winged men [and] ride to the Scarlet Hill of Immortality" (Li-P'o, 20). Keats's yearning for immortality and unconsciousness is equivalent to his death-wish, "the desire to 'dissolve, and quite forget,' and the 'embalmed darkness' and leaf-buried 'fast fading violets' of a landscape felt
rather than seen, a half supernatural bower where keen sense perception penetrates to the essence of things" (Hirst, 126). In stanza five, the poet, fully aware that he has "been half in love with easeful death," says to himself:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

(Keats, 280)

It seems to the poet that the ideal world of summer and full-throated ease represented by the nightingale is purely good and desirable. But, in reality, it is only a dream vision -- an imaginary escape to the realm of the immortal bird. Unlike the Taoist world which is neither good nor bad, the world of the nightingale is an oversimplification of life, which should be complex and directed to soul-making. The poet's pursuit of the nightingale and his attempt to merge with its world is a mistake because it simplifies himself into an extreme which denies the
truth and rich complexity of life. Similarly, his wish "to die" (Keats, 281) is also an undesirable simplification. For the Taoist, there is no difference between life and death, for they fuse into one. Keats's attempt "to die" in order to escape the sufferings of life is an extreme. Therefore neither the attempt to merge with the world of the nightingale nor the wish "to die ... upon the midnight with no pain" is the solution, for the world of "embalmed darkness" and no-time where the poet dies into the eternal music of the nightingale is but a dream:

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

(Keats, 281)

But "easeful Death" only seems rich. Instead of becoming a "sod" to song, the poet is tolled back to his "sole self" by his consecutive reasoning brain. Like Endymion's visionary escape into the world of immortality and unconsciousness, the poet's desire to dissolve into
the life of the nightingale "pouring forth [its] soul abroad/In such an ecstasy" is but a misrecognition of dream as reality:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
    To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
    As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
    Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
    Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
    In the next Valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
    Fled is that music: -- Do I wake or sleep?

(Keats, 281)

Keats's ability to enter into a state where he does not know if he is asleep or awake - "Do I wake or sleep?" - reveals the essence of Tao; for it is in this state of "honied indolence" or nondifferentiation that the poet is serene so that he simply reflects what happens to his mind. Like Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] in the butterfly dream, Keats in his nightingale dream recognizes his true identity through an anamorphic process: only in his dreaming of being the nightingale with the "full-throated ease" of summer song and his dying into the life of the immortal bird can he realize his poetic identity as a poet singing poetry with a self-consciousness. And it is in this state of non-assertion or non-
differentiation, that is, the state of poetic self-questioning: "Do I wake or sleep?" that the poet's uncommitted creativity and pure potentiality are held in the Taoist middle way which holds extremes and means in perpetually creative possibilities, the richness of pure potentiality which Keats calls "honied indolence."

In the following two Chinese poems, the poets, like Keats in the "Ode to a Nightingale," simply reflect in pure serenity what happens to their minds. The inner joy of the poets is reflected spontaneously without any distortion and limitations from their ego-consciousness:

In Spring I was soundly asleep;
Hardly did I notice the break of the day.
Everywhere I heard the birds singing.
Last night there was the noise of storm and rain;
I wonder how many blossoms have blown away.

Meng Hao-jan (689-740)

Since the days of my middle life
I was deeply devoted to Tao.
Recently I came to live
In the mountains of Chung-nan.
Oftentimes -- with joy in my heart --
Alone, I roam here and there.
It is a wonderful thing
That I am aware of myself.
When the streamlet ends my trip
I settle down and catch
The moment of rising mists.
Now and then I meet
A furrowed dweller of the woods.
We chat and laugh;
Never do we want to go home.

Wang Wei
(qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 176-177)

As in the "Ode to a Nightingale," here the reader is made to experience what the poet originally experienced from the actual situation. In this serene realm of the poet, the reader faces the objective reality in the poem and shares the poet's ontological experience. Through this interfusion of subjectivity, subject and object, self and nonself, man and the external world are united as one.

Keats's poetic way of thinking is not only similar to the Taoist way of thinking but also similar to that of our first proper philosopher-poet, Parmenides. In Parmenides of Elea, the poet tells of his adventure of being driven through the Gates of the Path of Night and Day to visit an unnamed Goddess. Under the guidance of the Goddess, the youth goes through an ordeal like the ones in The Odyssey, and finally the poet gains his access to truth through a descent into the magic region like that of Odysseus while visiting the underworld. David Gallop interprets the process of the poet's
gaining the poetic vision as follows:

Entry to it is gained through the Gates of the Path of Day and Night. These Gates...are a point at which Night and Day meet, a place where opposites are undivided, and where the familiar contrasts of human experience can therefore no longer be drawn. Thus the youth’s encounter with the Goddess is located where all difference or contrast has disappeared. Even the antithesis between Night and Day, which will later emerge as the foundation of all other mortal dualism (8.53-59, 9. 1-4), has there been transcended. In that region all is a single, undifferentiated unity. Hence the scene of Parmenides’ poetic ‘vision’ anticipates the conclusion of his philosophical argument. The setting of his ‘revelation’ neatly encapsulates its content.

(Parmenides, 7)

Like our first philosopher-poet Parmenides, Keats believes that what the imagination seizes is truth, for "what can be thought of is ‘there’ to exist; hence, what is not there to exist cannot be thought of. Thinking requires an existent object" (Gallop, 8). But the tragedy of human experience is that it puts too much emphasis on dualism. Gallop says, "mortal error consists not in the naming of two forms per se but in treating them as mutually exclusive, so that in any given context, it is not right to name one." And that
is why Keats insists on not reaching after truth, for in so doing one excludes the other in naming "one." The best way is to be negatively capable of being in uncertainty and doubt, and take the Middle Path in everything as Taoists do.

In his comments on Chinese art, Jacques Maritain explains this inner principle of dynamic harmony seized upon by the artist as a "sort of interpenetration between Nature and Man" (Maritain, 84). Through penetration things are spiritualized. When the artist reveals the reality concealed in things, he sets it free and, in turn, he liberates and pacifies himself (Keats mentioned that his writing of Endymion was a kind of means of freeing himself from his worrying over his brother, Tom). This invisible process, fundamental to Chinese art, is the action of Tao. Maritain points out that the interpenetration between Nature and Man is, in the last analysis, the interfusion between objectivity and subjectivity through the creative activity of the artist or the poet, at the root of which there is a common experience, without parallel in logical reasoning, by means of which objectivity and subjectivity are, in his own words, "obscurely grasped together" (Maritain, 84). The fusion into one through interpenetration is characteristic of the Keatsian chameleon poet who has no self, for he is constantly changing with the subject he imagines. Therefore, our traditional notion of time and truth in the Hegelian sense (absolute truth) does not matter at all to Keats. For him, whatever imagination catches is beauty, and beauty is truth, truth beauty.

To be one with the universe and all things is to be nonself-
assertive: the dissolution of the self into all other selves. The Taoist calls annihilation of the self Tz’u, the great sympathy. This sympathy holds all things in manifestation. The man of great sympathy lives within the moving force of the universe, and he himself is an inseparable part of it.

In the works of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], the great sympathy is immanent in the uncarved block and flows from nonbeing. There are two ways to approach this state of nonbeing: namely, Chih, intuitive knowledge, and T’ien, quietude, or repose.

According to the Taoist, Chih, intuitive knowledge, is pure self-consciousness through direct penetration into the essence of things instead of by way of logical reasoning. In the realm of intuitive knowledge there is no differentiation between the knower and the known; subject and object become one. That is the reason why we have the interfusion between the butterfly and Chuang Chou, the interpenetration between T’ao Ch’ien [Tao Qian], the poet, and his surroundings, and similarly Keats, the poet, and the nightingale. So, chih, intuitive knowledge, manifested by the interfusion and interpenetration between man and the universe, the universe and all things, is the highest spiritual power that unifies all things. And this intuitive knowledge is entirely different from any ordinary knowledge which is relative, limited, and subject to change. Just as Keats puts it, truth, like the great Tao, cannot be reached by "consecutive reasoning" but through beauty: a process which sets aside our rational intellect and excludes conscious reasoning. Keats is a Taoist in this sense: he
teaches without words: he teaches through the sense of beauty.

An allegory of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] illustrates Keats's aesthetic process of reasoning:

Knowledge journeyed northward ... and met Do-Nothing-and-Say-Nothing. Of him Knowledge asked: "How must we think in order to come to a knowledge of Tao? How is it approached? How do we pursue and attain it?" Do-Nothing-and-Say-Nothing answered not a word because he could not. Knowledge then travelled southward ... And met All-in-Extremes and put the identical questions to him. "I know," All-in-Extremes answered. And he started to tell him but immediately forgot what it was he was going to say. So Knowledge went to the Yellow Emperor and put his questions to him. The Yellow Emperor replied: "Tao may be known by no thoughts, no reflections. It may be approached by resting in nothingness, by following nothing, pursuing nothing.... the Sage teaches a doctrine which does not find expression in words."

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. XXII)

The questions Knowledge raised cannot be answered, for intuitive knowledge cannot be transmitted. Like the sense of beauty, it comes by itself just as Keats's "leaves coming to the tree" and flowers in blossom.

The second approach to the state of nonbeing is T'ien,
quietude. This approach refers to the process of gradual attainment of Tao in contrast to the first approach of intuitive knowledge, the sudden enlightenment. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] calls T'ien, quietude, the losing method. He says: "The student of knowledge learns day by day. The student of Tao loses day by day." The losing method enables one to approach the realm of quietude and enter the realm of nonbeing -- the maternal depth of Nature. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] says:

Devote yourself to the utmost void;
Contemplate earnestly in Quiescence.
All things are together in action,
But I look into their nonaction.
For things are continuously moving, restless,
Yet each is proceeding back to its origin.
Proceeding back to the origin means Quiescence.
To be in Quiescence is to see "being-for-itself."

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Passage 16)
(qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 48)

To enter into the state of perfect quiescence is to enter into the state of nonbeing, the invisible ground of the great sympathy. Through quiescence, T'ien, or through sudden enlightenment, Chih, subject and object, knower and the known are identified on the ground of great sympathy. The transformation of Chuang Chou [Zhuang Zi] into a butterfly and back into himself again, Keats's dissolution into the life of the nightingale and back to himself,
the poet, and Tao Chien's [Tao Qian's] "annulling" himself in the surroundings while picking flowers are not rationally analyzable: what occurs is a total union between the subject and the object - cause of its desire - through ontological experience in the realm of nonbeing, nondifferentiation, and nondiscrimination. It is a fulfilment of the demands of the great sympathy.
"Here Lies One Whose Name Was Writ in Water" is the inscription on the tombstone of John Keats in the Protestant cemetery in Rome. The poet requested this as he lay dying of consumption in February 1821. Why did Keats request such a phrase? According to Gittings,

The quotations that may have suggested this phrase are many; but the gentle sound of the fountain, which had been his companion for so many nights as he lay in the narrow room above the square, may have seemed the right symbol for his end.

(Gittings, 428)
Gitting's assumption well accords the historical background of the situation; for Keats, after Severn described the cemetery with flocks of sheep and goats and the early daisies and violets among the grass there, imagined and even "murmured that already he seemed to feel the daisies growing over him" (Gitting, 428 [my emphasis]); but he does not really tell why Keats wants to identify himself with water. If we just regard water as "the right symbol for his end," it seems to me that we are not giving enough credit to Keats; for his end is not a sad one but an epiphany for him. By identifying himself with water nurturing daisies and violets "growing over him," Keats, first of all, acknowledges the non-differentiation between life and death: a natural fusion into one; second, he reinstates his life-time philosophy of negative capability and soul-making because, like water, the negatively capable poet can identify with anything he imagines and describes and changes his identity like a chameleon. Going beyond Christianity, Keats found his consolation in "losing his own nature in that of Others" and in "identifying himself with another person" (Ibid. [my emphasis]). For Keats, water is also a very strong symbol for his "ideal of disinterestedness, at which he had aimed all his mature life" (Ibid.).

In the Taoist philosophy, water is likened to Tao; for it is powerful through "keeping below," and "flowing" in places that are despised. In Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] says:

Tao is forever flowing.

130
And yet it never overflows in its effectiveness.
It is an abyss like the ancestor of all things.
It mellows their acuity.
It dissolves their confusion.
It mitigates their brightness.
It is deep and yet as if real.
I do not know whose son it is.
It seems to be earlier than God.
....
The highest benevolence is like water.
The benevolence of water is
To benefit all beings without strife.
It dwells in places which man despises.
Therefore it stands close to Tao.

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], 28-9)

Keats's claim that his name was written in water proves him to be a good pupil of the great Tao, for he wants to "benefit all beings without strife" even after his death (dwelling in the place "which man despises") by providing, symbolically, nutrition to the flowers. Like a Taoist, Keats does not believe in religious anthropomorphism. For him, Heaven and earth have no human feelings of love. Only human beings are capable of love and compassion. As a non-Christian, Keats believes that the phenomenal world rests upon a polar opposition of forces akin to the positive and negative, creative and receptive, One and Two, light and shadow,
male and female, Yang and Yin -- the forces that bring about change and transformation; but he does not believe that it is self-opposing and self-contradictory. Instead, the world is self-balanced and self-contained. In his "Song of Opposites," Keats expresses his belief in the unity of opposites:

Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow,
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;
Come to-day, and come to-morrow,
I do love you both together!
I love to mark sad faces in fair weather,
And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder;
Fair and foul I love together....

(Keats, 171)

For Keats, the "sort of oneness" with all things and "a fellowship with essence" (Endymion, I, 777-811) can be achieved only through sympathetic imagination and "the holiness of the Heart's Affections" (Letters, I, 183).

Beauty as the Truth of Imagination

In his letter to Bailey expressing his own certainty of "nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination" (Ibid.), Keats talks about the nature of
"Men of Genius," who are unlike "Men of Power," "are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect -- [but] they have not any individuality, any determined Character," any "proper self." Together with his later theory of "negative capability" and "the poetical Character" (Letters, I, 193-94, 386-87) he is here talking about "the mind which," as Hirst says, "impartially opens to all new impressions, acts imaginatively yet imperceptibly, and effects its changes like a catalyst without imposing its own characteristics and preferences -- a disinterested mind which does not seek to dominate others through dogma or rules of conduct" (Hirst, 37). However, his concern is with the manner of artistic representation by means of the sympathetic imagination:

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination -- What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth -- whether they existed before or not -- for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty -- In a Word, you may know my favourite Speculation by my first Book [of Endymion] and the little song ["O Sorrow"] I sent in my last -- which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters -- The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream -- he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for
truth by consequitive reasoning -- and yet it must be --
Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived
at his goal without putting aside numerous objections --
However it may be, O for a Life of Sensations rather than
of Thoughts! It is 'a Vision in the form of Youth' a Shadow
of reality to come -- and this consideration has further
convinced me for it has come as auxiliary to another
favourite Speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy
ourselves here after by having what we called happiness of
Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated -- And yet
such a fate can only befall those who delight in sensation
rather than hunger as you do after Truth -- Adam's dream
will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination
and its empyreal reflection is the same as human Life and
its spiritual repetition. But as I was saying -- the simple
imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of
its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit
with a fine suddenness....

(Letters, I, 184)

This lengthy quotation shows Keats's philosophical ideas about the
truth of imagination. First of all, "truth" here for Keats appears
to be "reality" created by the artist's sympathetic imagination. So
whatever the imagination seizes as beauty must be as real as a
natural phenomenon whose existence is an undeniable truth. In his
"Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats further states his belief that
whatever is beautiful is as real as a fact known to be true, and whatever is true [to the imagination] must be beautiful:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say' st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," -- that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

(Keats, 283)

The truth-beauty equation reminds us that the urn, like all works of art, conveys general validities which are distinct from actual facts. Here "Beauty" is perceived and created by the harmonizing imagination fed by the "Heart's affections," and "truth" is simply the product of the imaginative endeavour. In the letter to Bailey of 22 November 1817, Keats contends that "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth" (Letters, I, 184); there he identifies truth with reality, with actuality. In the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats goes another step and asserts that the imagination can create new realities: beauty is truth. Furthermore, he claims that truth is beauty. In his paraphrase of the urn's
aphorism, Garrod says that "there is nothing real but the beautiful, and nothing beautiful but the real" (qtd. in Hirst, 132). Connecting the urn's dictum with Keats's announcements in his letters, Sir Maurice Bowra explains that "Truth is another name for ultimate reality" (Ibid.). In his comment on the truth-beauty paradox, Kenneth Muir writes: "Momentarily, and in response to the beauty of the Urn, the poet can accept the proposition ... that beauty is an image of truth, and that therefore, if we see life steadily and see it whole, the disagreeables will evaporate as they do in a great work of art" (Ibid.). Hirst says that the urn's aphorism "illustrates that the highest truths are paradoxical and not to be attained through persistent questioning and the accumulation of hard facts, not through the language of consecutive reasoning and science, but through feeling, through instinct, through a sensuous perception that stimulates the imagination, through (we may say) negative capability. Art allows us to intuit the final mystery in which beauty and truth are one" (Hirst, 133).

The power of imagination to create something "whether it existed before or not" as truth and beauty qualifies not only consecutive reasoning but also the mimetic theory of art. The only criterion for artistic creation is beauty, not the imitation of existing models. Even though the Grecian urn was not based on a real object, it is real. Therefore, the self-fulfilling imagination "may be compared to Adam's dream -- he awoke and found it truth." In the eighth book of Paradise Lost, Adam dreams, within the
theocentric framework where the powers of God and man's will fuse into one, about Eve, who has not existed before outside the dream itself, and "he awoke and found it truth." For Adam, the dream, with the mercies of a Christian God, provides him with a "shadow of the reality to come." But Keats, even though he has no settled convictions about the Christian God, still believes that imagination can be compared to Adam's dream, and whatever the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth.

In his two treatises -- *On Dreams* and *On Prophesying by Dreams* -- Aristotle draws a connection between the thoughts and deeds during the day and the images of the mind at night. Unlike Keats's dream as the "shadow of reality to come," Aristotle's "reality" is "only a development of potentialities explored during the sleeping hours, and the dreamwork an early confrontation with choices" (Goldberg, 121).

According to Freud, dreams are but the representations of the dispositions of the libido and the realities of a repressed unconscious. Dreams by nature are wish-fulfilling. However, both wish and fulfilment must be thoroughly disguised; otherwise, they will be rejected by the preconscious. Condensation and displacement provide the necessary means for the job -- they do the dream-work. Freud stresses the difference between the "dream-work" and conscious thought:

The dream-work is not simply more careless, more irrational, more forgetful and more incomplete than waking
thought; it is completely different from it qualitatively and for that reason not immediately comparable with it. It does not think, calculate, or judge in any way at all; it restricts itself to giving things a new form ... the dream has above all to evade censorship, and with that end in view the dream-work makes use of a displacement of psychical intensities to the point of transvaluation of all psychical values. The thoughts have to be reproduced exclusively and predominantly in the material of visual and acoustic memory traces, and this necessity imposes upon the dream-work considerations of representability .... Little attention is paid to the logical relations between the thoughts....

(Freud, 507)

Even though Freud is too dependent upon analytical thought, his emphasis on the difference between "dream-work" and conscious thought is similar to the Keatsian theory of the truth of imagination and consecutive reasoning. For Keats, the sympathetic imagination, like the Freudian dream-work, or Adam's dream, "does not think, calculate, or judge in any way at all; it restricts itself to giving things a new form [my emphasis]," -- a new "reality" as truth. It pays "little attention" to "the logical relations between the thoughts" -- logical reasoning. By transforming the philosophical process of "consecutive reasoning," Keats exclaims: "O for a life of Sensations rather than of
Thoughts!" In his account of the influence of Hartley's association psychology on Keats, Caldwell says that "what Keats means by a life of sensation, is the life of the imagination, a life solidly grounded in by-gone events of eye, ear, palate, etc., but modifying, refining, and ramifying them into infinitely complex chains of [association]" (Hirst, 38).

Like Adam's dream, Keats's visions are sometimes wholly prophetic. In Lamia, Hermes dreams about his sweet nymph by the river. And Lamia dreams about the God abandoning his golden throne in his sad search for the invisible maid. In Hyperion, Apollo dreams of Mnemosyne before he finds her beside him in the forest. Of course, Hermes, Lamia, and Apollo are Gods. Therefore, like Adam, their dreams are real: "Real are the dreams of Gods" (Keats, 345). Mortals, by contrast, have to pursue their dreams with an ardent intensity to stamp them with reality and worth. Unlike the God's dreams, those of the mortals in Keats's works are only partially prophetic. Endymion's dream of the immortal Goddess Cynthia, Isabella's vision of Lorenzo, a "pale shadow" with "cold doom/Upon his lips," alone in the forest, and the knight-at-arms's vision of the faery lady in "La Belle Dame sans Merci" all have to be pursued during their waking state in order to make them "truth" -- the "Shadow of reality to come."

In "The Eve of St. Agnes," Madeline dreams of Porphyro. On St. Agnes's Eve when legend promises that mortals can have their dreams come true, she retires to her room and performs the ceremonies proper to ensure a vision of her lover. But without her knowledge,
her lover with burning desire steals into her room just to wake her up with ancient ditties played upon a hollow lute:

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now
'Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
'Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
'And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
'How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
'Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
'Those looks immortal, those complainings drear!
'Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
'For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go.'

(Keats, 237)

Like Endymion, Isabella, and the knight of "La Belle Dame," Madeline's dream is only partially fulfilled, for she is not an
immortal. Unlike Milton’s Adam who awakens to discover what he has dreamed, Madeline, awakened from her sleep and confronted by a mortal lover, sighs at once: "How chang’d thou art!" Before, in her vision, her lover’s eyes were "spiritual and clear," his voice "at sweet tremble" in her ear. Now in her waking state, he is "pallid, chill, and drear." In order to merge these two visions — the mortal and the immortal, Madeline must "pursue with intensity the one through the other during her waking state. Of a 'no thing' she must create a 'thing real'" (Goldberg, 124).

The lovers’ pursuit of their vision through a "Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts" can produce essential beauty if pursued with ardent intensity; otherwise, it would remain a "no thing." Only by annihilating the self in pursuit of rich entanglements and enthrallments self-destroying can human beings create a new "reality" — a "thing real." Thus, for Porphyro, only by melting into Madeline’s dream can he fulfil his own dream:

\begin{quote}
Beyond a mortal man impassion’d far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush’d, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven’s deep repose
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet ...
\end{quote}

(Keats, 238)

Like the Gods whose dreams are "real," the lovers made their dreams
real by fleeing into the "elfin storm from faery land," the realm where "there are no ears to hear, or eyes to see" (Ibid.), therefore, fulfilling life's highest meed.

Chih and T'ien: Intuitive Knowledge and Quietude

For Keats, nothing "can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning," except through the sympathetic imagination fed by the "holiness of the Heat's Affections" (Keats, Letters, I, 183). The criterion for the understanding of a higher level of "truth" is "beauty" seized by the imagination. In the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats makes it clear that "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' - that is all/Ye know on earth and all ye need to know" (Keats, 283). Like a Taoist, Keats does not believe exclusively in reason. For him, only beauty seized by the sympathetic imagination of the poet can overcome the limitations of consecutive thinking. In his poetry, Keats uses images as symbols of a higher level of truth. Like a Taoist, Keats teaches "without words" (without consecutive reasoning); instead, he teaches through symbols in his poetry. Therefore, the process of "soul-making" is that of intuitive knowledge rather than logical rationalization.

In the "Ode on Melancholy," Keats uses oxymoronic images to express the theme of the transience of beauty. Unlike the "Ode to a Nightingale" and the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" which deal with the
contrast between a mutable and immutable world, the "Melancholy" ode deals exclusively with the earthly world. In this world of "melancholy," there is "no bower of permanence luring the poet into a futile attempt," as Hirst says, "to escape his ephemeral humanity, no eternal present of pure unconscious being to set off the fever and fret of hungry generations" (Hirst, 134). The poet simply reflects what happens to his mind without any egotistical interference. In the ode Keats tells the devotees of Melancholy to intensify their sensations by gazing upon what is most beautiful and transitory so as to realize that its ephemerality makes it all the more desirable (stanza two) instead of seeking Lethe, "the downy owl" (stanza one). He further advises that the goddess Melancholy be worshipped "in the very temple of Delight" (Keats, 284) in which she dwells with transient Beauty and Joy (stanza three). The outstanding feature of this poem is Keats's thinking through images, and it is through these concrete images as the gaze of the Other that the most philosophical truth is told without any "consecutive reasoning":

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

(Keats, 284)

Contrary to the deadening picture of the conventional Melancholy addict's lapse into insentience in the first stanza, here the "wealth of synaesthesia (visual impressions blend with sound, smell, taste, touch, motion, and even hunger) is in the service of mutability" (Hirst, 135). Images such as "weeping cloud," "April shroud," "morning rose," "rainbow," "salt sand-wave," and "globed peonies" are both beautiful and transient. They are complex and oxymoronic. The "April shroud" of "weeping cloud" is a symbol of death and birth, for growth is toward death and life depends on death. The "rose" is symbolic of ephemerality and it is enhanced by the epithet "morning," for morning will not last. The most powerful images in this poem are "the rainbow of the sand-wave." Rainbow is complex (sunlight on mist); "sand" is complex (made by wave, more solid than water but not to be built on); "wave" is complex (symbol of transience, dependent upon light from both the sun and moon); "salt" shows the waves are from the sea and contrast with the fresh mist of the rainbow made by the waves dashing against the shoreline. Here water, earth (sand), air, and fire (sun) are all together in the complex image of the line: the evanescence of the "rainbow" casting its glorious light upon the evanescent "sand-wave" -- a "soul-making" line which refuses simplicity for
complexity.

Like a Taoist, Keats teaches without words (logical reasoning). Instead, he teaches through images. In "Melancholy," he rejects the simplicity of black melancholy in favour of the complex melancholy allied to delight. In the third stanza, Keats says:

She dwells with Beauty -- Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine ...

(Keats, 284)

For Keats, Melancholy is an inseparable part of pleasure; it is at the heart of pleasure. And that is why Keats calls it "aching pleasure." Just as Hirst says that "the only means of feeling that one is alive is to stir 'the wakeful anguish of the soul'" (Hirst, 134), the only way to appreciate Melancholy fully is to glut ourselves on what is most beautiful and pleasurable.

In Epistle IX, Boileau had insisted with equal conviction upon the direct contrary with that of Keats:

Rien n'est beau que le vrai: le vrai seul est aimable;
Il doit regnet partout, et meme dans la fable ...

(Boileau, Epistle IX)
[Nothing is beautiful unless it is true: only the true is pleasant; it should reign everywhere, even in myth ...]

For Boileau, truth is more important than beauty. But for Keats, "with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration." Like a Taoist, in his non-action in hungering after truth, truth reveals itself through Beauty. By annihilating the self, the Keatsian poet reaches a state of nonbeing and non-differentiation in which beauty becomes truth and truth beauty.

In the chapter on the "Development of Nature" in the Works of Chuang Tzu, two methods of approach to the state of nonbeing are described, namely Chih, or intuitive knowledge, and T'ien, quietude, or repose. The first approach, through Chih, intuitive knowledge, deals with an inner experience of one's innermost being. In traditional Chinese philosophy, Chih is the key to the understanding of Tao and of the unlocking of the mystery of nonbeing. Chih, or intuitive knowledge, is pure self-consciousness through immediate, direct, and primitive penetration into the essence of things rather than by way of derivative, inferential, or logical reasoning. In the realm of intuitive knowledge, there is no differentiation between subject and object, the knower and the known, the conscious and the unconscious. Thus it is because of this identification and interpenetration between the universe and all things that Chuang Chou cannot tell if he is the man who is dreaming of the butterfly or if it is the butterfly dreaming about
him, as we have mentioned in chapter two. Intuitive knowledge is the highest spiritual power in our possession, and it is totally different from "consecutive reasoning," or ordinary knowledge.

According to Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], ordinary knowledge is gained through intellectual dissection and analytical reasoning. And such knowledge is limited, relative, and subject to change. Therefore, such knowledge can never reach a higher plane. In the chapter on the "Development of Nature," Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] says:

Those who would develop their own nature by means of ordinary learning, seeking to restore it to its original condition, and those who confuse their thoughts by the common way of thinking, seeking thereby to reach enlightenment, must be pronounced ignorant men.

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. XXII)

Just as Keats has said that truth cannot be reached by "consecutive reasoning," Tao cannot be reached by mere intellectual rationalization. Only by eliminating our conscious effort in reaching after truth can we reach the realm of the great Tao. Therefore, the Taoist teaches without words but through intuitive knowledge and non-explanation. As the allegory of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] we have quoted in chapter two goes, "Tao may be known by no thoughts, no reflections. It may be approached by resting in nothingness, by following nothing, pursuing nothing.... The Sage
teaches a doctrine which does not find expression in words" (Ch. XXII).

In the letter to Bailey on Adam's dream, Keats says that "the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine suddenness...." This "suddenness" may be compared to the Taoist "sudden enlightenment." Since intuitive knowledge cannot be transmitted, it must come as a sudden enlightenment. The Taoists often compare the process of sudden enlightenment -- the process of entering into the realm of nonbeing -- to that of bursting into sudden laughter, of leaping across a chasm or a gulf. One does not come into enlightenment step by step, nor does one come to it through a process of logical reasoning.

The theory of sudden enlightenment had great impact on the development of the Buddhist thought in China. A notable Buddhist of the fourth century, Tao-sheng, by taking over the Taoist theory, gives his famous statement of seeking the truth through enlightenment: "symbols are to express ideas. When ideas have been understood, words stop.... Only those who can take the fish and forget the net are worthy to seek the truth" (Chang, 43). This statement is very much similar to what Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] says:

The fishing net is used to catch fish. Let us take the fish and forget the net. The snare is used to catch hares. Let us take the hare and forget the snare. The word is used to convey ideas. When ideas are apprehended, let us forget the
words. How delightful to be able to talk with such a man who had forgotten the words!

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], ch. XXVI)

Keats's emphasis on "Beauty" as "truth" can be compared to the Buddhist "symbol" and "idea," and Chuang Tzu's [Zhuang Zi's] "fishing net" and the "fish." Since poetic composition is the creation of identity through symbols, "Beauty" is the only ultimate goal. Once a sense of beauty is achieved through the sympathetic imagination fed by "the Holiness of the Heart's Affections," truth becomes beauty. And this process of "seeking the truth" through sudden enlightenment is the direct opposite of that of "consecutive reasoning."

The Taoists mistrusted rational intellect as a means towards truth about life and the universe. Besides their method of teaching enlightenment without words, they also developed the method of wen ta (mondo in Japanese): that is, the question-and-answer method of teaching sudden enlightenment and entering the realm of nonbeing. An interesting example of mondo is the conversation between Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] and Confucius. One day, they met with each other and discussed how one can achieve sudden enlightenment. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] said:

The six classics, as you mentioned, are but the worn-out footprints of the sages of the past. The footprints are made by shoes, but they are not the shoes themselves....
Hawks stare at one another, and without moving their eyes their young are produced. There is a male insect which chirps with the wind while the female chirps against it, and thereby their young are produced. There are hermaphroditic animals which produce their own young independently.

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. XIV)

Confucius did not answer right away. After three months, he returned to Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] and said:

Magpies and their kind hatch out their young from eggs. Fish reproduce their kind by the impregnation of their milt. The wasp gives rise to itself by the process of metamorphosis. When the young brother is born the elder brother cries.

(Ibid.)

Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] answered: "Good! You have got it! You have grasped the Tao" (Ibid.).

The attainment of sudden enlightenment is the grasp of Tao. It is an ontological experience rather than a rational intellectualization. Even though mondo is used for the achievement of enlightenment, the answer to the question is not through logical reasoning, for there is no rational answer to Tao. Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] says:

150
He who replies to questions about Tao does not really understand Tao.... There is no possible inquiring about Tao and there are no answers to questions. Asking questions to which there is no answer is to lack inward knowledge. The foolish and those lacking inward knowledge have never observed the workings of the universe and are not aware of the Great Beginning. They cannot cross over the sacred mountain, Kun Lun, and soar away into the Supreme Void or Nonbeing.

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], Ch. XXII)

Similar to Keats's rejection of the common patterns of "consecutive reasoning" in reaching after truth, the Taoist rejects the similar methods of logical reasoning in attaining the great Tao. Only on the ground of nonbeing and through chih, intuitive knowledge, can we break with familiar processes and achieve enlightenment.

The second approach to enlightenment is through t’ien, quietude. Through quietude one reaches the state of perfect quiescence and nonbeing. In this realm of nonbeing and nonaction, one becomes aware of the root of all things. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] calls this the losing method. In Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] says:

Whosoever practises learning increases daily.
Whosoever practises Tao decreases daily.
He decreases and decreases
Until at last he arrives at non-action.
In non-action nothing remains not done.
The realm can only be attained
If one remains free of busy-ness.
The busy are not fit
To attain the realm.

(Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], 48)

Lao Tzu's [Lao Zi's] approach to quietude, from action to nonaction, is similar to Hegel's negative procedure of developing from the changing to changeless — the returning back to itself. In his *Philosophical Propaedeutic*, Hegel says, "Inasmuch as 'the state or condition' is cancelled through change, change itself also is cancelled. Being, consequently, with this process has gone back into itself and excludes otherness from itself. It is For Itself" (Chang, 48). To be in quiescence is to return to the origin, and to proceed back to the origin is to be "For Itself." Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] says that in this state of "extreme" tranquillity one gains an illuminating insight of one's real self, the innermost being: "When one is extremely tranquil then the Heavenly Light is given forth. He who emits this Heavenly Light sees his Real Self. He who cultivates his Real Self achieves the Absolute" (Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], ch. XXIII). William Wordsworth says that poetry is the recollection of our emotions in tranquillity. John Keats's "Ode on Indolence," "Sonnet to Sleep," and "Sleep and Poetry" all seem to emphasize the importance of quiescence through which we can enter the realm of nonbeing and see our "real selves." For the Taoist, to
attain absolute reality is to be in the realm of nonbeing either through t'ien, quiescence, or through chih, intuitive knowledge; and to enter into the realm of nonbeing is to have reached the ground of great sympathy.

Negative Capability and the Middle Path

The Taoist nonbeing is actually the denial of the ego through intuitive knowledge or through quietude. In his letter to Bailey, Keats gives a similar description of this egoless, self-effacing, tolerant, sympathetic, and imaginative person as one with no self, no identity. He is able to identify with the "Sun," the "Moon," "Man and Woman," nature and all things. Through sympathetic imagination he can enter into the life of a billiard ball, participate in the life of another being, and even project his feeling into the sparrow. This ability of denying the ego is what Keats termed "negative capability."

For Keats, an imaginative man who has no "determined Character," no "proper self," looks into the heart of a friend or even another being in order to forgive, and forgets himself so completely as to participate in the life of even a sparrow picking before his window. In Taoist words, a negatively capable person is one who can identify with all things through his sympathetic imagination fed by the "holiness of the Heart's Affections." It is on the ground of sympathetic imagination that he enters into the
realm of nonbeing. The achievement of the state of nonbeing is not achieved through "consecutive reasoning," but through sudden enlightenment, intuitive knowledge or quietude. Even though in the letter Keats attempts to answer Bailey's questions, he fails to give a logical answer; the Taoist would say that there is no answer to the question that cannot be answered. Instead, Keats answers the question by raising a question: "I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning -- and yet it must be -- Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections" (Letters, I, 184). Keats gives up his quest for truth through logical reasoning and claims that he prefers a life of sensations rather than a life of "Thoughts." Instead of reaching after truth, he is satisfied with the capability "of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts."

Keats's formulation of the term "negative capability" occurs in the letter to George and Tom of 21 December 1817:

...at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & 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 & reason -- Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with
half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

(Keats, Letters, I, 193-94)

According to Keats, only the imaginative person has negative capability, for through the sympathetic imagination one can enter into a different state of experience: "it has associations with a higher mode of existence," as Hirst says, "with divine revelation, with what is shut to reason though accessible to the imagination" (Hirst, 41). This "higher mode of existence" is what the Taoist calls the realm of nonbeing, nondifferentiation, and nondiscrimination. In this state of nonaction, there is no need to reach after "fact & reason," for they can only take us to certain point and no further. Therefore, we should be capable "of remaining content with half knowledge" and be satisfied with "a fine isolated verisimilitude."

Contrary to negative capability is consecutive reasoning. A person with consecutive reasoning abilities sees everything in its logical interrelationships and will always attempt to rationalize everything. Like the ancient Greek philosophers, who were outward-looking and who searched for a cosmological principle, the consecutive reasoner holds a one-sided principle, and always attempts to pursue it to its logical conclusions. Therefore, "its limitations," as Wilhelm points out in his commentary on Tao Te
Ching, "had to appear apparent at some point. In this respect, it
does not make a great deal of difference whether one adopts
'water', 'fire', 'atom', 'being', or 'spiritual matter' as the
basic principle: all of these are only aspects of a total
experience whose application is necessarily limited. This is why
the individual philosophical systems of the cosmological era of
Greek philosophy continuously changed and succeeded one another:
for they all lacked a central foundation" (Tao Te Ching, 14). For
John Keats, it is impossible to reach after truth through
consecutive reasoning simply because it lacks its foundation. Since
the world is changing each and every minute, every rule or
regulation is changing. Using the unchanging reason to rationalize
the changing world is obviously ridiculous. Furthermore, for a poet
like John Keats who trusts more his "heart" -- "the holiness of the
Heart's Affections," to use the cosmologically based principle to
interpret human "heart" obviously has its limitations.

Like Keats, the Taoist never strayed outside human territory.
Even though Lao Tzu's [Lao Zi's] teachings appear to be something
purely cosmological, the insight is founded upon a general
principle which also consists of the participation of the
individual. In section 21 of Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] speaks
of Tao:

The substance of the great Life
completely follows Tao.
Tao brings about all things
so chaotically, so darkly.
Chaotic and dark
are its images.
Unfathomable and obscure in it
is the seed.
This seed is wholly true.
In it dwells reliability.
From ancient times to this day
we cannot make do without names
in order to view all things.
Whence do I know the nature of all things?
Just through them.

(Tao Te Ching, 34)

In section 54 of Tao Te Ching, he speaks of Te, or Life:

What is well planted will not be torn up.
What is well kept will not escape.
Whosoever leaves his memory to his sons and grandsons
will not fade away.
Whosoever moulds his person, his life becomes true.
Whosoever moulds his family, his life becomes complete.
Whosoever moulds his community, his life will grow.
Whosoever moulds his country, his life will become rich.
Whosoever moulds the world, his life will become broad.
Therefore: by your own person judge
the person of the other.
By your own family judge the family of others.
By your community judge the community of the others.
By your country judge the country of the others.
By your world judge the world of the others.
How do I know the nature of the world?
Just through this.

_Tao Te Ching_, 51)

It is evident that the general principle of truth is not merely
cosmological but also reflects the presence of the individual. It
is through the interfusion of the outside world and the inner being
of the individual that truth reveals itself. In Lao Tzu's [Lao Zi] words, "Just through this."

Like the Taoist, truth is seized by the "Heart’s Affections" by
means of the sympathetic imagination. Whatever the imagination
seizes as beauty is truth. This kind of man who can seize "Beauty"
as "truth" is like "The Man of Calling" who puts away the other and
adheres to this: "Foreknowledge is the sham of Tao and the
beginning of folly./Therefore the right man abides with fullness
and not with penury./He lives in being, not in sham./He puts the
other away and adheres to this" (Tao Te Ching, 44). For the
Keatsian "Man of Calling," the "Life of Sensations" is better than
the life of "Thoughts" because the quest for certainty encourages
dogmatism and is ultimately doomed to failure. Furthermore, "in
time," as Wilhelm says, "every principle that has been derived from external experience will be disproved and become obsolete. For as mankind progresses, man's knowledge of the world changes; and, in the end, the known world is the only existing 'world'. On the other hand, whatever is known from a central experience (‘out of the inner light’, as the mystics put it) will remain irrefutable, provided that it has been seen purely and truly" (Tao Te Ching, 15).

The Taoist is concerned with the Self (the pure "I" which belongs to man-as-man) instead of the ego. In Keats's words, the Taoist has the "negative capability," because his only criterion of truth is through Chih, intuitive knowledge or T'ien, quietude, not through "consecutive reasoning" or science which keeps "reaching after fact & reason." The egoless Taoist appeals to the "empty heart" for the understanding of the great truths. Similarly, the egoless Keatsian poet appeals to an indeterminate "sense of Beauty" for "truth."

For the Taoist, the heart should be empty in order to comprehend the great truths. Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] emphasizes the importance of the empty heart for true knowledge and action. In Chinese, the word "heart" refers to one of the five senses; more specifically, it refers to "sensation" which mediates most directly with the external world. The word "heart" means something quite different to westerners compared to the Chinese; its chief associations are with "courage" or "feeling." Since the heart is the source of desire for external things, it is a possible source
of illusion. To prevent these perilous illusions from entering into our inner world, it is necessary for us to close "the gates" of sensations:

He who knows does not speak.
He who speaks does not know.
One must close one's mouth
and shut one's gates,
blunt one's sharp wit,
dissolve one's confused thoughts,
moderate one's light,
make one's earthiness common.

This means hidden community with Tao.

(Tao Te Ching, 52)

For Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], all "knowledge" and "cognition" are insufficient: "Put away holiness, throw away knowledge: thus the people will profit a hundredfold" (Tao Te Ching, 34). He does not seek "cognition" but "seeing" -- inner enlightenment. Like Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Keats does not seek "truth" but the "sense of Beauty" -- the source of sudden enlightenment. Keats's "sense of Beauty" is achieved through the sympathetic imagination fed by the "holiness of the Heart's Affections." It is obvious that Keats's sensation, like the Taoists, is the key to a higher realm of experience.

Unlike the Taoists who close "the gates" of sensations in order to empty the heart and reach the realm of nonbeing, the Keatsian
poet opens the gate of sensations through the sympathetic imagination in order to enter into the realm of "no self." The Taoist decreases the intensity of the sensations to reach non-action whereas the Keatsian poet increases the intensity of the "heart's Affections" in order to "overcome every other consideration." In the letter to George and Tom, Keats illustrates how "the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration" by commenting on Benjamin West's Painting Death on the Pale Horse in contrast to the same painter's King Lear. His only criterion is "intensity":

It is a wonderful picture, When West's age is considered; But there is nothing to be intense upon; no woman one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality. The excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth -- Examine King Lear & you will find this exemplified throughout; but in this picture we have unpleasantness without any momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness....

(Letters, I, 192)

Even though here Keats talks about how a beautiful painting arouses sensation through intensity, he is actually talking about passion which is capable of creating "essential Beauty" as "truth" -- a different reality, which transcends everyday actuality. As Hirst
comments, "By means of a process analogous to distillation in chemistry, but imaginative and therefore ultimately inexplicable in terms of consecutive reasoning, an audience somehow experiences as pleasurable what would be painful in real life. Thus the work of art bypasses the problem of evil; or, more precisely, though it depicts evil, it refuses to treat evil as an issue, since 'the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration'" (Hirst, 43).

Keats's "negative capability" is similar to Lao Tzu's [Lao Zi's] Te, Life. In his summary of Te, Wilhelm says, for Lao Tzu [Lao Zi], Te or Life "is nothing other than this spontaneously active essence of man, identical, in the final analysis, with the foundation of the world. Spontaneity of activity is of the greatest importance in this respect: for this spontaneity is the secret of Life of the highest order [see section 38 of Tao Te Ching]. From the point of view of the individual, however, this very spontaneity appears as negative (my emphasis). For the individual 'holds back'. The individual does not live itself, but 'lets itself be lived'; it is 'being lived' [see section 50]" (Tao Te Ching, 17). And this is why Lao Tzu emphasizes the importance of nonaction. Instead of idleness or inertia, this nonaction means a total receptiveness. This is also the reason that Te or Life is described in Tao Te Ching as female, as purely receptive. In his letter to Reynolds of 19 February 1818, Keats infers of this "negative capability" as "receptivity" that once "a certain ripeness in intellect" has been reached, the mind's play upon "Poesy or distilled Prose" becomes a "delicious diligent Indolence," rather like the flower's
receptivity than the busy bee’s impatient buzzing in pursuit of goals.

This receptiveness of both Lao Tzu and Keats is reminiscent of the "wise passiveness" of Wordsworth’s 1798 poem "Expostulation and Reply" in which he says:

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

(Wordsworth, 130)

Even though Keats admires Wordsworth, he dislikes his egotistical manner:

... are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist.... We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us.... How beautiful are the retired flowers! How would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, "admire me I am a violet...."

(Letters, I, 223-24)

The major difference between Wordsworth and Keats here is that Wordsworth, being positively sure of what he is advocating, can
tolerate no "half-knowledge" even though he pleads for a wisely passive attitude towards nature; Keats, being negatively capable, can tolerate any "uncertainty" or "halfseeing" or "half-knowledge" because by taking no action in reaching after "fact & reason" truth reveals itself through the "sense of Beauty" seized by imagination. Keats is less sure about himself than Wordsworth; therefore, he does not intend to impose his own ideas on others.

For Keats, indolence, receptivity, and intellectual tolerance are the only means by which truth can be achieved. After writing "O thou whose face," a poem on the potential creativity of indolence, Keats says: "Now I am sensible all this is a mere sophistication, however it may neighbour to any truth, to excuse my own indolence.... It is [no] matter whether I am right or wrong either one way or another..." (Letters, I, 233). In the "Ode on Indolence," which we have discussed in chapter one, Keats talks about "delicious diligent indolence" (Keats, I, 231-32) as a state of pure potentiality, of uncommitted creativity. This wise passiveness represents for the poet a more meaningful existence than that of the impatient buzzing "bee" (Ibid.) hungering after Love, Ambition, and "demon Poesy" (Keats, 285): "At least for me, -- so sweet as drowsy noons,/And evenings steep'd in honied indolence" (my emphasis); "O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,/That I may never know how change the moons,/Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!" (Ibid.). Keats rejects "busy common-sense" in favour of sensation, for any "common-sense" requires a choice (consecutive reasoning). As soon as the poet makes a
choice, he has simplified his options and has compromised the pure spectrum of possibilities before writing. That delicious moment before writing a specific line is the best moment of complex meditation on all possible lines! Hence, true "honied indolence," like the Tao, is godlike in its scope: neither Yin nor Yang but seeing both Yin and Yang before they are specified as different from each other! This negatively capable attitude of Keats towards his own theory of negative capability here is very much like the Taoist attitude of non-differentiation. By not asserting even his own "speculations," Keats claims that he will never "be a Reasoner": "I have not one Idea of the truth of any of my speculations -- I shall never be a Reasoner because I care not to be in the right..." (Letters, I, 242-43).

Keats's disinterestedness and indifference in being "in the right" can be achieved only in the realm of nondifferentiation. Here the unification of the subject and the object, the self and the nonself, the knower and the known, right and wrong, is achieved through spontaneous interaction. It is a total union through ontological experience, nondifferentiated and nondiscriminated. Like the butterfly and the man in the story of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], they become one in the realm of nondifferentiation. Since everything falls into one, there is no need for us to have a "deliberate mind" to strive for unity: if you strive for unity, there will be no unity. Similarly, if you strive for truth, there will be no truth. Like the Taoist, by taking nonaction, everything falls into place. As Ch'eng Hao [Cheng Hao] says: "The
changelessness of Heaven and Earth is that their mind penetrates all things while they themselves have no mind. The constancy of the sage is that his passion accords with all things, yet he himself has no passion" (qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 51). It is not difficult for us to see the similarity between the Taoist sage and Keats: their passions accord with all things. For them, there is "no opposite" because, as Ch'eng Hao [Cheng Hao] says, "The Tao has no opposite" (Ibid.).

According to Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], there is no distinction between right and wrong. He says:

How is Tao obscured that there should be a distinction between true and false? How is speech obscured that there should be a distinction between right and wrong?

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], 43)

In his comment on the nondistinction between right and wrong, the famous modern Chinese philosopher Fun Yu-lan says: "All distinctions of right and wrong are due to opinion. That which can reveal the falsity of opinion is reason. Reason 'sees things in the light of Heaven,' and knows that the 'system of right and wrong' depends on human judgments and has nothing to do with nature. To see this is "the very essence of Tao'" (qtd. in Chuang Tzu, 44). In his own illustration of the nondistinction between right and wrong, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] compares the 'universe' to a "finger," and
"all things" to a "horse": "To take fingers in illustration of
fingers as not being fingers, is not so good as to take non-fingers
in illustration of fingers as not being fingers. To take a white
horse in illustration of horses as not being horses, is not so good
as to take non-horses in illustration of horses as not being
horses. The universe is a finger; all things are a horse" (Chuang
Tzu [Zhuang Zi], 45). In his commentary on Chuang Tzu's [Zhuang
Zi's] passage on the "finger" and the "horse," Kuo Hsiang says that
"there is nothing better than illustrating one thing by another" to
prove that there exists no distinction between what is right and
what is wrong:

In order to show there is no distinction between right and
wrong, there is nothing better than illustrating one thing
by another. In illustrating one thing by another, we see
that all things agree in that they all consider themselves
to be right and others to be wrong. Since they all agree
that all others are wrong, so in the world there can be no
right. Since they all agree that they themselves are all
right, so in the world there can be no wrong. How it be
shown that this is so? If the right is really absolutely
right, there should be none that considers it to be wrong.
If the wrong is really absolutely wrong, there should be
none that considers it to be right. The fact that there are
uncertainty between right and wrong and the confusion in
distinctions shows that the distinction between right and
wrong is due to partiality of view, and that things are really in agreement. In our observation, we see this truth everywhere. Therefore, the perfect man, knowing that the universe is a finger and all things are a horse, thus rests in great peace. All things function according to their nature. They all enjoy themselves. There is no distinction between right and wrong.

(qtd. in Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], 45)

In the West, there are similar views on the nondistinction between right and wrong. The famous story about Meister Eckhart and "a daughter" whom he calls the "purest person" from the realm of nondifferentiation goes as follows:

A daughter came to the preaching cloister and asked for Meister Eckhart. The doorman asked:
"Whom shall I announce?"
"I don't know," she said.
"Why don't you know?"
"Because I am neither a girl, nor a woman, nor a husband, nor a wife, nor a window, nor a virgin, nor a master, nor a maid, nor a servant."
The doorman went to Meister Eckhart and said:
"Come out here and see the strangest creature you have ever heard of. Let me go with you, and you stick your head out and ask: "Who wants me?"
Meister Eckhart did so and she gave him the same reply she had made to the doorman. Then he said:
"My dear child, what you say is right and sensible but explain to me what you mean." She said:
"If I were a girl, I should be still in my first innocence; if I were a woman, I should be giving birth in my soul to the eternal world; if I were a husband, I should put up a stiff resistance to all evil; if I were a wife, I should keep faith with my dear one, whom I married; if I were a widow, I should be always longing for the one I loved; if I were a virgin, I should be reverently devout; if I were a servant-maid, in humility I should count myself lower than God or any creature; and if I were a man-servant, I should be hard at work, always serving my Lord with my whole heart. But since all of these I am neither one, I am just a something among something, and so I go."
Then Meister Eckhart went in and said to his pupils: "It seems to me that I have just listened to the purest person I have ever known."

(qtd. in Chang Chung-yuan, 53)

Like Keats, the "daughter" does not care if she is "in the right." As a matter of fact, she is not sure of anything; she is "just a something among something." In the realm of nonbeing and nondifferentiation, the "daughter" was one with the great sympathy
and was herself part of it. This denial of the selfhood of the "daughter" is obviously similar to that of the Keatsian poet.

In his letter to Woodhouse of 27 October 1818, Keats draws a clear distinction between Wordsworth’s poetry and his own. For Wordsworth, poetry requires a man speaking to man with an ultimate motive of drawing attention to the author and his ideas. For Keats, poetry is "Unobtrusive": it "enters into one’s soul and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject" (Letters, I, 224). In other words, Keats’s poetry has no purpose beyond itself. Unlike Wordsworth, Keats does not impose his own identity on the reader. Through the process of the "annulling self" the poet dissolves his own self into the life of the subject he imagines and describes:

As to the poetical Character itself ... the camelion Poet ...
... is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity -- he is continually in for -- and filling some other Body -- The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute -- the poet has none; no identity....

(Letters, I, 386-87)

The Keatsian poet resembles the chameleon, for he changes his identity with the subject he imagines or describes, thus leaving him with no identity of his own. Like the Taoist "Man of Calling"
or the "perfect man," he has "no self." According to Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], the perfect man identifies himself with the universe and "goes up and down with evolution"; therefore, he is absolutely free. But in the ordinary world, we are not free. In order to be happy, we have to depend upon something. For example, if one finds happiness in wealth, one will lose it in poverty. But the perfect man is not affected by finite things because he transcends all distinctions and is happy in any form of existence. For him, there is no difference between life and death, gain and loss, good luck and bad luck, right or wrong. In speaking of Lieh Tzu [Lie Zi], who could ride on the wind, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] said:

Though he was able to dispense with walking, there is still something which he had to depend upon (that is, the wind). But if one chariots on the normality of the universe, and rides on the transformation of the six elements, and thus makes excursion in the infinite, what has one to depend upon.

(Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], 29)

And Kuo Hsiang said:

To chariot on the normality of the universe is to follow the nature of things. To ride on the transformation of the six elements is to make excursion in the road of change and evolution. If one is going on like this, where can one
get the end? One will chariot on whatever one meets; what
will one have to depend upon? This is the happiness and
freedom of the perfect man, who unites his own self with
its other.

(qtd. in Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], 29)

The perfect man identifies himself with the external world and
follows the nature of all things. So Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] said:
"The perfect man has no self; the spiritual man has no achievement;
the sage has no name" (Ibid.). They have no name and no achievement
because they let everything be "itself" to do its own work and have
its own name.

The Taoist "perfect man" and the Keatsian poet with "no self"
are those who have "the intellectual love of God," to use an
expression of Spinoza. The philosophy of Taoism, the Keatsian
philosophy, and that of Spinoza are so much in common that one
passage which was written by Joseph Ratner as an introduction to
The Philosophy of Spinoza could illustrate this:

The intellectual love of God is a devotion purged of all
fear, of all vain regrets and even vainer hopes. The wild
and angry emotions of sorrow leave the strong and noble
heart of man like the tidal waves leaving the scattered
rocks of the shore.... The free man is born neither to
weep nor to laugh, but to view with calm and steadfast
mind the eternal nature of things.
To know the eternal is the immortality we enjoy. But to know the eternal we must forget about ourselves. We must cease to be consumed by a cancerous anxiety to endure in time and be permanent in space. In the order of nature our own particular lives are of no especial importance. And unless we recognize this, we are doomed to a miserable fate. We must recognize that our mere selves can never give us ultimate fulfilment or blessedness of soul. Only by losing ourselves in nature or God can we escape the wretchedness of finitude and find the final completion and salvation of our lives. This, the free man understands. He knows how insignificant he is in the order of nature. But he also knows that if only he can lose himself in nature or God, then, in his own insignificant particularity, the eternal and infinite order of nature can be displayed. For in the finite is the infinite expressed, and in the temporal the eternal.

(The Philosophy of Spinoza, XIX)

This attitude towards the inseparable relationship between man and the universe is echoed by Russell in his Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays. He says:

To take into the innermost shrine of the soul the irresistible forces whose puppets we seem to be -- death and change, the irrevocableness of the past, and the
powerlessness of man before the blind hurry of the universe
from vanity to vanity -- to feel these things and to know
them is to conquer them....

The life of man, viewed outwardly, is but a small thing
in comparison with the forces of nature. The slave is
doomed to worship time and fate and death, because they are
greater than anything he finds in himself, and because all
his thoughts are of things of which they devour. But, great
as they are, to think of them greatly, to feel their
passionless splendour, is greater still. And such thought
makes us free men; we no longer bow before the inevitable
in Oriental subjection, but we absorb it, and make it a
part of ourselves. To abandon the struggle for private
happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to
burn with passion for eternal things -- this is
emancipation, and this is the free man's worship. And this
liberation is effected by a contemplation of fate, for fate
itself is subdued by the mind, which leaves nothing to be
purged by the purifying fire of time.

(Russell, 55)

Of course, the seeming passivity of Taoism is not "Oriental
subjection" but "emancipation" through nonaction. Both in Taoism
and Keatsianism, there is an idealization of passivity,
receptivity, Indolence, intuitive knowledge, instinctive activity
of primitive people, of children, of birds and beasts. For both the
Taoist and Keats, government, laws, institutions, and all things artificial cause pain and suffering. Unlike Shelley and Byron who are both revolutionary poets and revolutionaries in practice, Keats is not specifically interested in politics and world affairs. In this sense, he is a true Taoist. He rejects revolution in favour of evolution (natural process). In both Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion, he makes his idea of progress clear that the dispossession of the old race by the new is not the result of revolution or conquest but the "course of Nature's law" (Keats, 260), a process like the ripening of fruit:

... the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself...

(Keats, 261)

Here Keats's theory (Oceanus's theory) of evolution in Hyperion "combines the cyclical pattern of nature," as Hirst says, "with the linear progress of history: things ripen and decay, but each generation is more beautiful than the previous one," "for 'tis the eternal law/That first in beauty should be first in might" (Keats, 262).

Unlike Shelley and Byron who proclaim their own positive theories to guide the revolution, Keats does not really believe in revolutionary theories even though he claims in Hyperion that it is "the eternal law/That first in beauty should be first in might"
(Ibid.). In *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley rejects the theory of power in favour of love as the means to the liberation of the exploited and the oppressed. In *Don Juan*, Byron presents a real picture of the evils, vices, follies, absurdities, and hypocrisy of the world just as Wordsworth does in *The Prelude* when he describes the "blank confusion" of Bartholomew Fair as an "epitome" (Wordsworth, 486) of London. As a satire on abuses of the present state of society, *Don Juan* seems to be a communist manifesto for Byron like that of Karl Marx: only revolution can put an end to corruption and vices.

Keats, by comparison, is not a political thinker nor a revolutionary activist like Shelley or Byron. He is mainly a poet of imagination. Intellectual rationalization or, to use his own term, "consecutive reasoning," is set aside, because it makes distinctions and thus destroys the mysterious whole. Therefore, the best way to unite the opposites is to take the negatively capable attitude and follow something akin to the "Middle Path" of Taoism, and never attempt to reach after "fact & reason." As Jung says: "From a consideration of the claims of the inner and outer worlds, or rather, from the conflicts between them, the possible and the necessary follows. Unfortunately our Western mind, lacking all culture in this respect, has never yet devised a concept, nor even a name, for the union of opposites through the middle path, that most fundamental item of inward experience, which could respectably be set against the Chinese concept of Tao" (Jung, 203). Jung is certainly right here, but he might be biased in saying that "the Western mind ... has never yet devised a concept, nor even a name,
for the union of the opposites through the middle path" (Ibid.), because, in western philosophy, we have the famous doctrine of the golden mean or the "Aristotelian Mean." "The Golden Mean," like the Taoist "Middle Path," is associated with moderation, temperance, and the avoidance of extremes. The mean is not an absolute centre-point nor is it arithmetical or quantifiable. It is something adjustable, shifting, and relative to the situation at hand and the personality involved. In his summary of Aristotle's doctrine of "The Golden Mean" in A History of Western Philosophy, Russell says:

We now come to the famous doctrine of the golden mean. Every virtue is a mean between two extremes, each of which is a vice. This is proved by an examination of the various virtues. Courage is a mean between cowardice and rashness; liberality, between prodigality and meanness; proper pride, between vanity and humility; ready wit, between buffoonery and boorishness; modesty, between bashfulness and shamelessness.

(Russell, A History, 174)

Like the Aristotelian "Golden Mean," Keats's concept of "Negative capability" functions very much the same way as the Taoist concept of the "Middle Path": both provide the creative manner through which the sympathetically imaginative individual attains oneness with the universe and all things without going to extremes in
reaching after "fact & reason" (Keats, *Letters*, I, 193-94). Of course, Aristotle's mean between extremes is intended to address primarily ethical issues rather than the ontological issues of being itself as in much Taoist philosophy. Nevertheless, both are based on the same insight, which is why we can refer to their common "creative manner."
The means by which Keats achieves his poetic vision is the gaze of the Other: to conceive of concrete imagery as a formal procedure, the aim of which is to produce a shock of self-consciousness [or surprise "into a perception" (Wordsworth, 635)] by means of a "stain," a point from which the image itself looks at the viewer, the point of the gaze of the Other. Keats has been termed the most pictorial of the Romantic poets. His use of the lexicon, of syntax and grammar, and the characteristic rhetorical devices of his poetry make him the closest friend of Taoist poets like Tao Ch’ien [Tao Qian], Li P’o [Li Bai], and Wang Wei. Through his use of concrete images and nouns, resonant vowels, and dynamic verbs, Keats’s poetry carries with it a dynamic force different
from that found in tranquil poems by Wordsworth or in visionary poems by Coleridge. Like the Elgin marbles, Keats's poems are sculptures or pictures in words. In his defence of Keats against Arnold's accusation that he was "the merely sensuous man," Jones says that Keats is a poet of "feeling," of intensity, of picture-making... (Jones, 32). Hirst remarks that of all Keats's poetic techniques, such as his particular models, set patterns, diction, and devices, the most characteristic Keatsian device is the "one that fuses poetry with painting and sculpture: the suspension of movement at a pregnant moment" (Hirst, 29). This could be proved by the difficulty his contemporaries had in understanding his poetry. An famous example is his use of the concrete image of "a beaker full of the warm south" in the "Ode to a Nightingale" (Keats, 280) which, as we noted at the outset, even Byron "could not understand," according to Leigh Hunt (qtd. in Perkins, 1120).

The reason why Byron had difficulty understanding the meaning of "a beaker full of the warm south" is that the "beaker" which functions as the "stain," the gaze of the Other, is disturbing the transparency of the picture; Byron is left like the Taoist poet, Tao Ch'ien [Tao Qian], who became lost in the realm of "no-words" while picking flowers in the south mountains [symbol of longevity]. He can no longer see the point from which the image is gazing at him. Therefore, through his identification with the "beaker," Byron, as reader and viewer, the subject who is looking at the object (cause of its desire), is actually seeing his own eyes gazing at himself through the image of "a beaker full of the warm
south." Like Porphyro in "The Eve of St. Agnes," who experiences an illusion of seeing himself seeing himself in the closet of Madeline's chamber as a peeping-Tom, Byron as viewer experiences the same kind of illusion of seeing himself seeing, for that image of the "beaker" as the "stain" in the poetic picture functions as the gaze of the other, that phallic spot that "sticks out," that "does not fit" in the idyllic surface scene and "denatures" it, renders it "uncanny." As Zizek says, this phallic "stain" is "the point of anamorphosis in the picture: the element that, when viewed straightforwardly, remains a meaningless stain, but which, as soon as we look at the picture from a precisely determined lateral perspective, all of a sudden acquires well-known contours" (Zizek, 90).

In the movie Joy Luck Club, the female protagonist, while she was alone in her bedroom after her failure in the piano contest, looks at the blank wall and says that "I can see my eyes looking at me." What she is saying is that, first of all, she is experiencing the illusion of seeing herself seeing herself, and second, the gaze is always outside. In Lacanian discourse, we human beings are looked at all the time; our identities are conditioned by and in the linguistically structured outside world. As in the story of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] and the butterfly, after he is awakened from his dream of the butterfly, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] is no longer the "butterfly" in the dream but Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], the person, defined by others in the butterfly net of the mundane world. In his dream, he does not care if he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] or the
butterfly; only when he is awake, he realizes that he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] for others. Human identity is always conditioned by the gaze of the Other, and it is linguistically structured. Only through it can one achieve one's true self-identity.

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Jacques Lacan gives a thorough analysis of the function of the gaze as *Objet Petit a*. The Lacanian gaze, at the outset, differs dramatically from that of Derrida. According to the theory of Derridian deconstruction, the gaze is on the side of the subject, not on the side of the object. Derrida believes that the gaze is always already conditioned by the "infrastructural" network, which defines the limit of what can be seen from, as Zizek explains, "what remains unseen and thus necessarily escapes capture by the gaze, that is, by the margin or frame, which cannot be accounted for by an 'auto-reflexive' reappropriation" (Zizek, 125). In other words, for Derrida, what is the gaze "if not theoria grasping the 'thing itself' in the presence of its form or in the form of its presence" (Ibid.). Contrary to the Derridian effort of deconstruction, the Lacanian gaze is not on the side of the subject but on the side of the object. The gaze is conceived at an invisible point at which something seems to be missing from the representation, from which the subject looking at it is already gazed at: that is, it is the object that is looking at me. Far from assuring the subject of being able to grasp "the 'thing itself' in the presence of its form or in the form of its presence," the gaze functions thus as a "stain," a blot in the object (in the picture)
disturbing its transparent visibility and causing an irreducible split between the eye and the gaze (the subject and the gaze as object). It thus takes on a terrifying alterity that prevents the subject from seeing itself in the representation: "I can never see the picture at the point from which it is gazing at me: that is, the eye and the gaze," as Zizek says, "are constitutively asymmetrical. The gaze as object is a stain preventing me from looking at the picture from a safe, 'objective' distance, from enframing it as something that is at my grasping view's disposal. The gaze is, so to speak, a point at which the very frame (of my view) is already inscribed in the content of the picture viewed" (Ibid.). In the English language, the catch phrase "catch sight of" seems to denote a similar kind of process: before you look at something or somebody, the object is always already gazing at you; what you can do is but to catch "sight" of it: that is, catching it looking at you.

In "Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a" in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis," Lacan tells us an interesting story of a sardine can. For the sake of analysis, I will quote his story at length. Lacan says:

It is a true story. I was in my early twenties or thereabouts—and at that time, of course, being a young intellectual, I wanted desperately to get away, see something different, throw myself into something practical, something physical, in the country say, or at the sea. One
day, I was on a small boat, with a few people from a family of fishermen in a small port. At that time, Brittany was not industrialized as it is now. There were no trawlers. The fisherman went out in his frail craft at his own risk. It was the risk, this danger, that I loved to share. But it wasn’t all danger and excitement—there were also fine days. One day, then, as we were waiting for the moment to pull in the nets, an individual known as Petit Jean, that’s what we called him—like all his family, he died very young from tuberculosis, which at that time was a constant threat to the whole of that social class—this Petit Jean pointed out to me something floating on the surface of the waves. It was a small can, a sardine can. It floated there in the sun, a witness to the canning industry, which we, in fact, were supposed to supply. It glittered in the sun. Petit Jean said to me—"You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn’t see you!"

(Lacan, 95)

Lacan did not quite understand what Petit Jean meant at first. As a young intellectual from college, Lacan could not identify himself with the fisherman’s point of view sympathetically. Even though the fisherman found it very amusing, Lacan could not. The reason for this, as Lacan says, lies in the fact that "I, at that moment--as I appeared to those fellows who were earning their livings with great difficulty, in the struggle with what for them was a pitiless
nature -- looked like nothing on earth. In short, I was rather out of place in the picture" (Lacan, 96). What Lacan is trying to say here is that, to the fisherman, he appears to be like nothing but a "stain" or "spot" in the picture. The reason why the sardine can "doesn't see" him is that, as Lacan says, "in a sense, it was looking at me.... It was looking at me at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated -- I am not speaking metaphorically" (Lacan, 95).

In Book VII of The Prelude, Wordsworth, while walking on the streets of London, catches sight of a blind beggar gazing at him. He is shocked into self-consciousness or, to use his own words, "surprised into a perception" of the true story of Man:

And once, far travelled in such mood, beyond
The reach of common indications, lost
Amid the moving pageant, ’twas my chance
Abruptly to be smitten with the view
Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood propped against a Wall, upon his Chest
Wearing a written paper, to explain
The story of the Man, and who he was.

(Wordsworth, The Prelude, VII, 609-615)

Here the blind Beggar as the "stain" in the picture functions as the gaze of the Other disturbing its transparent visibility and preventing the viewer from seeing himself in the representation.
Under the gaze of the blind Beggar, Wordsworth is "abruptly smitten" and made conscious of "the story of the Man" and realizes his identity, but the poet is left without his own identity because of the interfusion of the subject and the object. Wordsworth cannot see himself in this presentation/picture, but he can see himself through the gaze of the Other (the beggar there on the street).

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan gives us a clear explanation of this antinomic relation of the gaze and eye: the eye looking at the object is on the side of the subject, while the gaze is on the side of the object. When I view an object, the object is always already gazing at me, and from an invisible point where I cannot see it. Lacan says:

> In the scopic field, everything is articulated between two terms that act in an antinomic way---on the side of things, there is the gaze, that is to say, things look at me, and yet I see them. This is how one should understand those words, so strongly stressed, in the Gospel, "They have eyes that they might not see." That they might not see what? Precisely, that things are looking at them.


The importance of Lacan's definition is that there is always that gaze of the Other that is always already looking at us before we can see it. But, unfortunately, we cannot see it looking at us even though we can see it. And this is the reason why we cannot see...
ourselves in the representation.

In the poetry of John Keats, the antinomy of the gaze and the view is almost pervasive. Keats's constant use of "concrete imagery" and the pictorial quality of his poetry render him the most appropriate for such a synthesis. To clarify this, let us take his image of the "dead leaf" in the opening scene of Hyperion:

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

(Keats, 248)

This scene exemplifies what Hirst calls the most characteristic Keatsian device that "fuses poetry with painting and sculpture: the suspension of movement at a pregnant moment" (Hirst, 29). The
pictorial representation of the "vale" with such concrete visual imagery and particularity of diction renders the perfectly natural, familiar, and idyllic scene, in a way, "denatured," "uncanny," loaded with "horror" and potential threat: the "shady sadness" of the vale makes it "uncanny" and unnatural or supernatural; the words "deep," "shady," and "far sunken" arouse fear, horror, and anxiety about threatening possibilities. The particularity of diction here also helps to create a horrible feeling in the subject: the use of long vowels and diphthongs (such as "deep," "shady," "vale," and "far") impedes the movement of the narrative as each word carries with it the weight of a picture, thus creating a tone of a fairy tale with suspended "movement at a pregnant moment." But, after all, what is it that renders this picture of the vale "uncanny?" Needless to say, it is that typical, controlling Keatsian concrete image that is "sticking out," that is "out of place" in the idyllic picture of the "vale" and renders it "denatured," and "uncanny." To be more precise, it is, to use Lacanian psychoanalytical terms, a Keatsian "stain" or "spot": that is, the "dead leaf" in the picture at its invisible point from which it is gazing at the viewer makes him feel "uncanny." It is obvious that the "dead leaf" as "stain" here functions as the gaze of the Other.

Besides the uncanniness of the "dead leaf," the scene with "no stir of air," "not so much life," and "not one light seed" does not make any sense either within the frame of the idyllic natural "vale" in the mid-morning "on a summer day." This signifier
of the "dead leaf" arouses an air of strangeness and horror. All of a sudden, we realize that we are in a world of double meaning, and everything appears to have some hidden meaning that is to be interpreted later by the dethroned hero of Hyperion, Saturn, whose "old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead" like a "dead leaf." The horror is thus internalized and is repeated from the "dead leaf" to the "dead" king. It rests on the gaze of the "dead leaf" which forebodes some terrifying secret behind the idyllic picture of the "vale." Furthermore, as a controlling image in Hyperion, the "dead leaf" as "stain" functions as a signifier of the lack, an absent Other. Therefore, the viewer of the "dead leaf" identifies, in effect, with someone who is off the scene, an absent "other" whose main function is to signify a "void" space to be occupied. And this is exemplified later on by Apollo's occupying the "void" space signified by the "dead leaf" through his dying "into [the] life of" the Other: that is, from the "dead leaf" into the new leaf--the God of verse (Keats, Hyperion, 268).

In contrast to the characteristic Keatsian device of concrete imagery, Shelley's visual images are faint and abstract. For the convenience of discussion, let us take the opening scene of The Triumph of Life for example:

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask
Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth--
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth...

(Shelley, *The Triumph*, 278)

At the outset, this opening scene is a straightforward description of the landscape: "Earth," "mountain snow," and "clouds," and there is nothing "uncanny," nor is there anything "sticking out" or "out of place" in the picture compared to the opening scene of Keats’s *Hyperion*. In this picture, there is no "stain" as "the gaze of the Other" that is looking at us. The words Shelley uses do not carry as much weight as Keats’s. They are light and conform to the speedy movement of the narrative. Contrary to Keats’s use of long vowels and diphthongs, Shelley uses short vowels (such as in "swift," and "spirit") to quicken the movement of the narrative. In addition to this, Shelley uses present participles such as "hastening" and "rejoicing" to denote positiveness and movement, whereas Keats uses past participles such as "sunken," "gray-haired," and "feather’d grass" to arrest the moment or to "suspend the movement at a pregnant moment" in order to solicit our gaze. In Taoist terms, Shelley is more on the Yang side of the great Tao, being "positive" in his choice of words, whereas Keats is more on the Yin side of the Great Tao, being "passive" and "receptive".

Another feature to be noticed in *The Triumph of Life* is the importance of Shelley’s use of terza rima. This device that Dante
used in the *Divine Comedy* consists of lines of hendecasyllabics, in sets of three lines, the middle line of each rhyming with the first and third lines of the next set (a b a, b c b, c d c, etc.). This rhetorical device has its symbolic aspect; whatever Trinitarian significance it had for Dante, Shelley's use of it emphasizes its dynamic nature and its cyclical movement from a to b and then back to a, and then from b to c and back to b, etc. (see Diagram II attached). For Shelley, life is movement, progress, maybe revolution, and the cyclical movement of life is always positive: that is, it is moving forward rather than repeating itself. Unlike Shelley, Keats believes in the "passive" side of life: a life of "receptiveness" and of "negative capability," for any attempt to reach after "growth" or "truth" through "consecutive reasoning" or revolution as Shelley and Byron strongly believe in is bound to fail due to its unnaturalness and immaturity. Things ripen by themselves just like leaves coming to the tree and like flowers blooming in the spring. Like the Taoist, Keats believes in the "negative capability" of being in the "Middle Path"; and like Parmenides, he believes in the theory of the "unmoving motion" (Parmenides, 9). By adopting a negatively capable attitude towards life, the Keatsian chameleon poet feels content with uncertainties and doubts and never attempts to reach irritably after "fact and reason." Whether Shelley consciously or unconsciously chose the rhetorical device of terza rima in *The Triumph of Life* as a symbolic device denoting positive movement is not important here; the important thing is that, for Shelley, life is poetry, poetry
The major difference between the opening scenes of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* and Keats's *Hyperion* is that, in terms of libidinal economy, Shelley's description is still at the "oral" stage while Keats's is already at the "phallic" stage. To put it in another way, Shelley simply presents to us a picture of "naturalness," a "direct rendering of reality" (or part of reality considering the space-time continuum), which, as spectators or readers, we can "devour with our eyes." But Keats's pictorial reality is visionary. In this particular scene of the "vale" in *Hyperion*, it is "unnatural" with something "sticking out" from the idyllic surface scene that renders it "uncanny." To summarize, Shelley's opening scene of *The Triumph of Life* shows what is to be seen, while Keats's opening scene of *Hyperion* solicits the viewer to see what remains to be seen by means of the gaze of the Other. Like the *Tao*, the essence of Keats's poetry is revealed only by showing what is unseen.

**Desire of the Other: Lamia**

In Lacanian discourse, the gaze as the object of the subject's desire always causes an impossible relationship between the subject and the object because of the naive ideological opposition between the "hard reality" and the "world of dreaming." As in the parable of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] and the butterfly, we do not have a
Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] dreaming for a moment that he is a butterfly; what we actually have is, on the contrary, a butterfly dreaming in the butterfly net of the common everyday reality that she is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi]. In fact, the "hard reality" is a dream; Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] does not recognize that he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], the person, in everyday life. Only in his dreaming of being a butterfly does he realize that he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi]. As Zizek says, "as soon as we take into account that it is precisely and only in dreams that we encounter the real of our desire, the whole accent radically shifts: our common everyday reality, the reality of the social universe in which we assume our usual roles of kind-hearted decent people, turns out to be an illusion that rests on a certain 'repression,' an overlooking of the real of our desire. This social reality is then nothing but a fragile, symbolic cobweb that can at any moment be torn aside by an intrusion of the real. At any moment, the most common everyday conversation, the most common ordinary event can take a dangerous turn, damage can be caused that cannot be undone" (Zizek, 17). This "intrusion of the real" is what happens both in Keats's Lamia and the Chinese legend of The White Snake, and this is clearly demonstrated by means of the looplike progress of both stories: events progress "in a linear way, until, all of a sudden, precisely at the point of catastrophic breakdown, we find ourselves again at an earlier point of departure. The path to catastrophe turns out to be only a fictional detour bringing us back to our starting point" (Ibid.).
Keatsian scholars will easily realize the similarity between Zizek's remark and that of Stillinger on the geometrical "Keatsian structure": the "literal or metaphorical excursion and return" in Keats's poetry (Stillinger, xvi). In his introduction to *John Keats: Complete Poems*, Stillinger gives a full description of the "basic Keatsian structure":

There is a basic Keatsian structure -- a literally spatial conception of two realms in opposition and a mythlike set of actions involving characters shuttling back and forth between them -- that appears in a great many of the poems and can usefully serve as a device for relating poems, passages, and situations one to another in a view of what Keats's work as a whole is preponderantly "about." This structure can be illustrated by means of a simplified cosmography of the poems. Here is a diagram I have used .... to represent the typical lyric poem of Keats's time as a literal or metaphorical excursion and return (see Diagram III attached):

The horizontal line stands for a boundary separating the actual world (below) and the ideal (above). The two realms have many familiar labels -- for example, earth and heaven, mortality and immortality, time and eternity, materiality and spirituality, the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite, realism and romance, the natural and the supernatural. The ideal is represented above the line
because it is, so to speak, a higher reality.

Characteristically, the speaker in a Romantic lyric begins in the real world (A), takes off in mental flight to visit the ideal (B), and then ... returns home to the real (A').

(Stillinger, xvi)

Here Stillinger's "ideal" world resembles the "real" world of Zizek or Chuang Tzu's [Zhuang Zi's] dreaming world of the Butterfly. The "speaker" starts from (A), arrives at (B), and returns to (A'). According to Stillinger, the "return" is not simply an arriving back because "he has acquired something -- a new understanding of a situation, a change in attitude toward it -- from the experience of the flight, and for better or worse he is never the same afterward" (Ibid.). Of course, the "speaker" is never the same, for the retroactive fictionalization provides a means by which the "speaker" comes back into a Taoist oneness: the union of the conscious and the unconscious, the self and the non-self, being and nonbeing.

In both Keats's Lamia and the Chinese legend of The White Snake, the distance between the visionary flight to the "world of dreaming" and the return to "hard reality" is the exact place of fiction in which the "repression," the real of our desire, is played out. In both cases, we achieve "a new understanding" of our own identities after "the experience of the flight" into the dream world like that of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] and the butterfly.

Keats's superb love narrative, Lamia, differs from the version
in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which Keats appended to the poem. In Burton's version, the Corinthian Lycius lives in bliss with the snake-woman, Lamia, in the illusory palace of her own creation, and displays his beautiful bride to his relatives and friends at a wedding banquet where her magic is penetrated by the "cold" philosopher Apollonius, Lycius's former teacher, and where she vanishes. But in Keats's version, Keats adds an opening episode where, after a successful bargain between Hermes and Lamia, the God transforms the serpent into a woman again, thus enhancing the story's potential for dramatic contrast. The most important change Keats made is Lycius's death after Lamia is found out. This greatly intensifies the "sensation" of the story by affirming the cold fact that dreams are real only for Gods, whereas for mortals they usually end in disappointment or in disaster. Furthermore, Burton's story is but a popular legend about "spirits" enchanting and victimizing man according to a popular superstition, whereas Keats's story is about woman's desire for love and the denial of it by the "cold philosophy" of the patriarchy. In a sense, the latter is a negation of the former.

By bringing his poem into more direct touch with life and human problems, Keats exposes a construction of "reality" dominated by bourgeois ideology and a patriarchal perspective in *Lamia*. Through the story of the erring woman named Lamia and her relation to the world of Corinth, the microcosm of the world, the poem emphasizes the necessity for female desire to be sacrificed to the needs of the patriarchy. For Lamia is seen in the poem to internalize the
patriarchal demands which require the sacrifice of herself and her happiness for the supposedly "higher" male ends.

In the opening episode, Lamia bargains with Hermes for a successful transaction of power, and later on she succeeds in enchanting Lycius in her dream world. This represents a complete reversal of the role of Lamia as woman. In a still male-dominant world of both Gods and the human world of Corinth, Lamia assumes the "masculine" role of "aggressor," thus posing a threat to the Law of the Father. As a "stain," the spot that is "sticking out," that is "out of place," in the idyllic natural world of Corinth, rendering it "uncanny," "supernatural," "denatured," loaded with horror and potential threat, Lamia functions as the gaze of the Other in the picture. As lure, fascination, and dream, Lamia enchants the dreamer, Lycius. In Lacan's words, as gaze, Lamia put Lycius, the viewer, into the picture, or she "photo-graphed" him (Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts, 106). As object of desire, Lamia functions as the gaze of the Other that mirrors the desires of both God (Hermes) and man (Lycius). Her position as woman is thus designated in the patriarchy, and she is forever put into a dilemma between subjectivity and desire.

In her comment on Freud's theory of femininity in Sexuality in the Field of Vision, Jacqueline Rose says:

What Freud's paper on femininity reveals, therefore, is nothing less than the emergence of this concept of desire as the question of sexual difference -- how does the little
girl become a woman, or does she? ... Her desire ... [is] the desire for an unsatisfied desire.

(Rose, 49)

In Lamia, the "unsatisfied desire" is shown at the very outset of the poem. Hermes -- "the rake of Gods" -- Olympian herald and patron God of thieves, merchants, lovers, democratic suffrage and luck at lottery, light-fingered lifting and shifty disappearances, vacates his "golden throne" and leaves his seat unattended in order to seek out his love, a nymph:

The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amourous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove’s clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shore of Crete.

(Keats, 342)

But, as God, Hermes’s power is not limitless. Without the help of Lamia, the reptilian enchantress, who has a demonic power over the nymph, Hermes’s passion cannot be requited. Therefore, a bargain with Lamia is both necessary and inevitable for both of them. Unless he grants her wish to become a woman again, Lamia will not reveal the nymph. Just as in a business transaction, Lamia has something Hermes wants. Therefore, that something functions as the
object of desire for the subject. So does it have power over the subject.

In psychoanalytical terms, the power of Lamia as woman over man originates from her "dark" past as symbol of threat of castration. According to Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex, there are two Oedipal phases in the development of the child. In the pre-Oedipal phase, the child is first bound in illusory unity with his mother, whom he does not recognize as Other, separate, or different. In the positive Oedipal phase, as the child moves into the phallic phase, he loves his mother and hates his father who reserves the mother for himself. Successful resolution of this Oedipal phase takes place when the boy finds out that his mother does not have a penis, that is, is castrated (he can only imagine that all people must originally have had penises). This bitter discovery propels him away from his mother, since he fears that by identifying with his mother who is castrated, he will endanger his own organ. Now he identifies with his father, whom he longs to be like, and he looks forward to "finding someone like his mother" to marry.

But Lacan's notion of the Oedipus complex is a little bit different from that of Freud. Lacan combines Freudian psychoanalysis with semiology/semiotics to rephrase Freudian theory. Lacan's concept of the imaginary corresponds (roughly) to Freud's pre-Oedipal phase. In this world of the imaginary, the child is still at the prelinguistic moment, the moment of his illusory unity with the Mother, whom he does not know as Other. But the Lacanian child is forced to move away from the Mother, not
because of the literal threat of castration but because he acquires language, which is based on the concept of "lack." He enters the world of the symbolic governed by the Law of the Father and revolving around the phallus as signifier. Here, in language, he discovers that he is an object among the signifiers that circulate around the Father (=father). This phase of the Lacanian child equals the positive Oedipal phase of Freud. For Lacan, as Rose summarises: "castration means first of all this -- that the child's desire for the Mother does not refer to her but beyond her, to an object, the phallus, whose status is first imaginary (the object presumed to satisfy her desire) and then symbolic (recognition that desire cannot be satisfied)" (Rose, 62).

It is obvious that both Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex and Lacan's notion of the imaginary and the symbolic provide the answer to the question of why woman as object (cause of desire) has power over the subject: she is the symbol of the threat of castration. In Keats's poem, Lamia's power over Hermes is obviously derived from her threat of castration, for, like the nymph, Lamia's "woman's face" mirrors the "unsatisfied desire" of the God. Even though she has desire, she does not own it. Her desire is the desire to be desired. Her image as a castrated woman speaks castration and nothing else. In her essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," British film critic Laura Mulvey says:

To summarize briefly: the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold, she first symbolizes
the castration threat by her real absence of a penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic ...
Woman’s desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic).

(Mulvey, 58)

In patriarchal culture, women, according to Mulvey, stand as signifiers for the male other and nothing else. They are bound by a symbolic order in which "man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (Ibid.).

In The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Lacan gives us one of his most famous formulations: "man’s desire is the desire of the Other." The "Other" here is designated as that locus of speech, discourse, language, signification, the unconscious, and desire that forms the matrix of this process. In Eagleton’s words, the subject desires what the Other unconsciously desires for him: "we desire what others ... unconsciously desire for us; and desire can only happen because we are caught up in linguistic, sexual, and social relations -- the whole field of the ‘Other’ -- which generate it" (Eagleton, 174). The formulation "man’s desire is the desire of the Other" therefore indicates the privileged position of
"man" in his relation to language, and the term "man" is literally taken as denoting a masculine subject, the subject of language and desire, while woman (not real woman) is deprived of this privilege because of her position in language. In distinguishing between the human and animal relations to the fascination of the lure, Lacan makes the spatial distance between the subject and the object clear as the cause of desire:

Only the subject -- the human subject, the subject of desire that is the essence of man -- is not, unlike the animal, entirely caught up in this imaginary capture. He maps himself in it. How? In so far as he isolates the function of the screen and plays with it.


In the linguistically based Lacanian psychoanalysis, man has the advantage of having desire, while woman has only the disadvantage of the "envy of desire" (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality, 97). In defining the desire of the hysteric, Lacan says that the hysteric's desire is "the desire for an unsatisfied desire" (Lacan, Ecrits, 257), and in "Framework of Perversion in the Woman," Lacan explains woman's different relation to desire and specifies it as the "envy of desire":

Far from its being the case that the passivity of the act corresponds to this desire, feminine sexuality appears as
the effort of a jouissance wrapped in its own contiguity
(for which all circumcision might represent the symbolic
rupture) to be realized in the envy of desire, which
castration releases in the male by giving him its signifier
in the phallus.

(Lacan, Feminine Sexuality, 97)

The image of the Lacanian woman "wrapped" in contiguity, deprived
of the phallus as signifier of desire, finds its parallel in many
of Keats's women, especially Lamia and Madeline. They are like the
close cousins of Lacan's "woman."

In Lamia, man's desire is mirrored by the positive action taken
by Lamia in her rebellion against the patriarchal unconscious,
which, according to Lacan, is structured like a language. Since she
does not own the "desire," her "sexuality appears as the effort (my
emphasis) of a jouissance wrapped in its own contiguity to be
realized in the envy of desire" (Ibid.). This is clearly shown in
her claiming to have once possessed a "woman's shape." Now in her
bargain with Hermes, Lamia asks him to change her back into a woman
once more:

I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth -- O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
Stop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shall see thy sweet nymph even now.

(Keats, 344)

There is no better example to express the Lacanian notion that a woman’s desire is the desire for an "unsatisfied desire." Lamia’s demand is a typical feminine discourse within the patriarchal metadiscursive structure. Given that the patriarchal discourse is spoken by both sexes and all the characters are required to speak its voice, it is almost impossible for us to locate a feminine discourse in it. But "the feminine voice is indeed present and definable, having an organization of its own which is interwoven with and into the patriarchy. If we understand the feminine discourse in this manner, one is prevented from seeing it as solely a strategy of intervention into the patriarchal discourse. Thus, the feminine, as well as the patriarchal, structures the ... text" (Suter, 89). But Lamia’s speech here counter-structures the poetic text, for it does not speak the voice of the patriarchy. Instead, it challenges the legitimacy of patriarchy by asking it to change its laws to set her free from her serpentine "tomb."

Lamia’s demand to be a woman again is in fact her charging of the Father with a breach of one of his patriarchal duties: to protect the woman in his charge from violation. Thus, Lamia protests that it is the Father who is responsible for her first crime and metamorphosis. But unfortunately the feminine under patriarchy is not expected to speak and, when she attempts to, is not expected to be coherent. Even though Lamia has a voice here,
she will, as the poem shows, be eventually made to lose her voice, for the Law of the Father is irrevocable.

Foretold of Hermes's arrival by a dream, Lamia seizes the chance to be released from her curse, but she does not know that it is but another effort of hers to be released only in order to be eventually banished from the human, although into what cannot be said. Clarke says, "Lamia presents the figure of a vanisher, a perpetual exile who must take whatever form her circumstance may permit" (Clarke, 567). As a dream, Lamia has to be relegated to the dark abyss of the human unconscious; as the symbol of the feminine, Lamia has to be cast out of the masculine psyche.

For Lamia, the lack of stability of her social position is the root cause of her suffering because she does not have a distinct identity as subject. Her existence is the existence only in her relation (through love or marriage) to man, and she functions only as the male Other. Deprived of her connection with man, her existence is but a scene of such fabulous suffering:

> When from this wretched tomb shall I awake!
> When move in a sweet body fit for life,
> And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
> Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!

*(Keats, 342-43)*

But as soon as she becomes a woman again, Lamia resumes the function of a penised lady casting an image of castration in the
Lacanian world of the symbolic governed by the Laws of the Father and revolving around the phallus as signifier. Here, in language, she discovers that she is an object in a realm of signifiers that circulate around the Father (=phallus). Here, she becomes the icon "displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men," as Mulvey says, "the active controller of the look," and threatens as women always do to "evoke the anxiety it originally signified" (Mulvey, 65). Clarke regards this penised lady as "the phallic mother on whom the fantastic catastrophe of castration descends, the potential female at the centre of pre-Oedipal fantasies and post-Freudian speculations" (Clarke, 576). But, according to Freud and Lacan, the male unconscious has two avenues for escaping this castration anxiety: one is voyeurism, and the other is fetishistic scopophilia. Through voyeurism, man's original trauma is re-enacted (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery) with the counterbalance of the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object. Through fetishistic scopophilia, man completely disavows castration by substituting a fetish object or turns the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous. Mulvey says:

This second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself. The first avenue, voyeurism, on the contrary, has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt of (immediately
associated with castration), asserting control, and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness.

(Mulvey, 64)

In the poem, Lamia presents nothing but this fabulous "woman's face" to cause castration anxiety for man. Through her magic, she puts the dreamer into her dream. But for the dreaming man, there is always this fear of the waking up. In order to demystify this dream, Lycius presents Lamia to the world of Corinth as his "prize" and fear:

What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abash'd withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
And triumph, as in thee I shall rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.

(Keats, 343)

In order to conquer his fear, Lycius has to resort to the assessment and acceptance of the general public of Lamia as really his "prize," because, for Lamia to be his real "prize," her "use value" confined to the "house" only (for Lycius's personal "use" only) is not enough for him; therefore, he has to take her to the human "market" of Corinth for her "exchange value."

It is very important for us to note that Keats's Lamia looks
like a poem about bargaining, trade, and the "exchange" of power and human values. Early on, Lamia and Hermes bargain for their mutual benefit: Lamia demands that Hermes place her "where he [Lycius] is" and give her "woman’s form," while Hermes is quick to swear a binding oath: "Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,/ Telling me only where my nymph is fled" (Keats, 344). In this exchange of possessions, "Lamia appears as both the pander and the pandered to"; Clarke says, "she prostitutes her power. Hermes and Lamia agree to swap possessions, to barter potencies, to enter into a momentary, entirely self-interested participation in the other’s power. But for Lamia, whose power is circumscribed to her sexuality, only bad bargains are possible. The bargain they strike is like a metaphor that reads both ways. Reading Hermes as the tenor of this figure, it says ‘a thief of love is a snake in the grass’; reading Lamia as the tenor, it asks ‘can a woman be held down in a tomb forever?’" (Clarke, 569). But after the successful transaction of value between Lamia and Hermes, Lamia transforms her "exchange value" into "use value" to Lycius. As the life of any commodity which depends on its exchangeability, Lamia’s value to Lycius has to be re-evaluated in the market of Corinth. As Nietzsche remarks in his Genealogy of Morals: "setting prices, determining values, contriving equivalences, exchanging [my emphasis] -- these preoccupied the earliest thinking of mankind to so great an extent that in a certain sense they constitute thinking as such" (Nietzsche, 506). Perhaps Hermes, Lamia, and Lycius are all bargain hunters and the hunted in the world of exchange of
goods in free commerce. Therefore, there is always a fear of theft and dispossession for them. In order to protect his trophy, the only way out for Lycius is to take Lamia to the world of Corinth and subject her to the scrutiny of "other men" (Keats, 343). Furthermore, by subjecting Lamia to the male gaze of Corinth for rationalization, Lycius attempts to conquer his own "fear" about her identity and overcome his doubt about the reliability of his own "consecutive reasoning." In so doing, Lycius kills two birds with one stone: protecting his trophy and conquering his fear so that he can claim to possess his trophy both sexually and psychologically. In Fenichel's words, Lycius's striving for triumph is actually the striving for "the disappearance of fear and inhibition as a result of the acquisition of the trophy" (Fenichel, 157):

With the help of the superego, the ego "participates" in the more powerful father's might, and the acquisition of the superego is the equivalent of the acquisition of a trophy .... All trophies are somehow personified "superegos" [in] that they all have one thing in common with the superego: they both protect and threaten their possessor. As long as one keeps a trophy in one's house, one has the powerful being in the house, and compels it to protect one. But, just as behind the peaceful "participation" there always lurks the original intention of robbing, so is this protection always conditional too.
For Lycius, Lamia is more an image (fantasy) than a real woman to him. Her identity as woman and her origin arouse the greatest fear in him. His sense of insecurity is clearly shown when Lamia begs him not to leave her "on the hill alone." Lycius says:

Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie --
Even as thou vanishest so shall I die.

(Keats, 348)

Even though Lycius feels triumphant about his trophy, which will carry him 'foremost in the envious race' (Keats, 347), he can never eliminate his fear. He has to take his prize to Corinth to invite "envy" and conquer his fear, thus killing two birds with one stone.

To the marxist critic Levinson, however, the main motive for Lycius' presentation of Lamia, "a material essence," to the world of Corinth is to find out her exchange value as "that monstrous thing, the commodity" (Levinson, 278). In her essay "'Lamia': Sympathy for the Devil," Levinson says: "Lycius's two operations, upon Lamia and Corinth, amount to a single process. Through his conversion of Lamia's ideal sensuous particularity into a medium of exchange -- the means by which to obtain Corinth's envy and also to establish its impoverishment with respect to his new wealth (that
is, Lamia as both a coveted quantity and as the means of producing another such quantity) -- Lycius brings into being a new and exclusive social value .... Lamia, who was once Lycius's absolute value, becomes to him the material form of an exchange value" (Levinson, 279).

No matter whether Lycius's intention of presenting Lamia to the Corinthians is to claim his trophy or to strive for her "exchange value" or to conquer his fear, Lamia, in Lacanian discourse, functions as the "stain" in the picture of the human world of Corinth. As "stain" -- the gaze of the Other, Lamia as dream enchants the dreamer and puts him into the dream picture. Once Lycius is entrapped in the picture, he is no longer able to see (through) Lamia at the point from which she is gazing at him, for the gaze is always outside; that is, the gaze is always on the side of the object, not the subject. As Lacan says: "I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture .... I am photographed" (Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts, 106). In Lamia, the "stain" as the gaze of the Other in the idyllic picture of Corinth renders everything "unnatural," "uncanny." All of a sudden, things appear to have double meanings, and everything is not what it seems to be; thus the subject's desire to search for the "hidden" meaning becomes almost insatiable. This is precisely what the "blinded" dreamer, Lycius, does in his effort to investigate Lamia. With the "surplus knowledge" of her origin ("goddess" or "demon's mistress"), Lycius, in order to demystify
her mystery by subjecting her to the male gaze, asks Lamia about her "name" after he has enjoyed the undisturbed happiness with her in the illusory world of her own creation:

Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
"Sure some sweet name thou hast, though by my truth,
I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Has any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?

(Keats, 353)

Of course, Lamia does not "fit" into this picture of Corinth, nor does she have a "Fit appellation" because, as a woman, to use Lacan's words, she "does not exist," she "signifies nothing," and she is "not all" (Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 145):

"I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.

(Keats, 353)
With Lamia as gaze in the picture positioned at an invisible point from which it is already gazing at him, Lycius is prevented from seeing it when he looks straightforwardly at it in the picture (because he is "blinded" and captivated by her). As one of the most famous lines in Chinese poetry goes, "You can never see the real beauty of Lushan Mountain just because you are in it." Lycius cannot see through the snake-woman because he is already part of the dream picture -- the dream has already put the dreamer in the picture. Just as in the story of Chuang Tzu and the butterfly in which the dream and the dreamer become one, here Lamia as dream and Lycius as dreamer have become one through the interfusion of subjectivity.

In a short dialogue between the Queen and Bushy, the King's servant, in act II, scene ii of Shakespeare's Richard II, Bushy, in explaining the impossibility of seeing the gaze straightforwardly, tries to convince the Queen that her sorrow has no foundation by pointing out its illusory and phantomlike nature:

Bushy: Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,  
Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;  
For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,  
Divides one thing entire to many objects;  
Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon  
Show nothing but confusion; ey'd awry (my emphasis)  
Distinguish form: so your sweet majesty,  
Looking awry upon your lord's departure,
Finds shapes of grief more than himself to wail;
Which look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
Of what it is not. Then, thrice-gracious Queen,
More than your lord's departure weep not: more is
not seen;
Or if it be, 'tis with false sorrow's eye,
Which for things true weeps things imaginary.

Queen: It may be so; but yet my inward soul
Persuades me it is otherwise: howe'er it be
I cannot but be sad; so heavy sad
As, though on thinking on no thought I think,
Makes me with heavy nothing faint and shrink.

Bushy: 'Tis nothing but conceit, my gracious lady.

(Shakespeare, Richard II, II, ii, 656)

What interests us here is not the way Bushy gets himself entangled in contradiction by saying just the opposite to the Queen in order to convince her that there is no cause for alarm but the Queen's gaze distorted by sorrow and anxiety ("looking awry") that sees the thing in its clear and distinct form (and, incidentally, the further development of the drama justifies the Queen's presentiments). When we look at a thing "as it really is," it "is nought but shadows"; but when we look at it "at an angle" with a view distorted by desire, the object assumes clear and distinctive
features. Like Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* mentioned in chapter one, looking straightforwardly, we see nothing, but "looking awry" at it, we see the "skull" flying to the foreground of the picture revealing what has been "annihilated." "This describes perfectly the *objet petit a,*" as Zizek says, "the object-cause of desire: an object that is, in a way, posited by desire itself. The paradox of desire is that it posits retroactively its own cause; that is, the *objet a* is an object that can be perceived only by a gaze 'distorted' by desire, an object that does not exist for objective gaze" (Zizek, *Looking Awry*, 12).

In *Lamia*, Lycius, being entangled in the dream, can never see through Lamia (for he looks at her "straightforwardly" as she is even though with some doubt about her history). This causes fear and anxiety in the subject, and that is why Lycius insists on taking her to the world of Corinth so that he can subject her to the gaze of the Other. Lycius's subjection of Lamia to the voyeuristic investigation of the men in Corinth is certainly sadistic, for he seems to take delight in his asserting control of Lamia:

___ The lady's cheek
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.

(Keats, 353)

To eliminate his fear of "castration" completely, to use Freud's term, Lycius has to turn Lamia from a penised lady (serpentine enchantress) into a fetish by presenting her to the male community in Corinth. In so doing, Lycius hopes both to ascertain his own masculine sexuality and win the envy of the Corinthians (obtain the "exchange value" of Lamia). But the patriarchal world governed by the Law of the Father, the philosophy of Apollonius, does not allow any illusions (imagination or dream). In his vain attempt to bring Lamia to Corinth for the "envy" of "other men," the patriarchal approval of his prize, Lycius manufactures their mutual downfall. When Lamia is presented to the male gaze of Apollonius at the wedding banquet, the demon-gazer with his vicious desire, the "uninvited guest," shouts at Lycius in anger:

"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov'd; "from every ill
Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"

(Keats, 358)

216
No doubt Lamia has foretold her own doom; she has seen it before. Under the vicious gaze of Apollonius with his "keen, cruel, perceant, stinging, demon eyes" (Keats, 358), Lamia as dream and representative of the feminine has to vanish in order for the Father to restore the order of the patriarchal household:

Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the sophist's eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion'd him to be silent; vainly so,
He look'd and look'd again a level -- No!
"A serpent!"

(Keats, 358)

In this symbolic struggle between the eye and the gaze of the Other, that is, between Apollonius (subject) and Lamia (object), Lamia, this fantastic "stain" as gaze in the picture, as object-cause of desire, objet petit a, the "nothingness" of pure seeming, must "drop out or sink for any symbolic reality to emerge" (Zizek, 94) just as Lamia as the "foul dream" must be "gone" (Keats, 358).

In other words, the Keatsian concrete imagery that produces a shock of self-consciousness by means of a "stain" as gaze in an idyllic picture (such as in Hyperion, "Isabella," "The Eve of St. Agnes," and Lamia) is achieved as if to prove the Lacanian thesis: "The field of reality rests upon the extraction of the objet a,
which nevertheless frames it" (Lacan, *Ecrits*, 554). In Keats’s poetry, the "return" from the visionary world, as Stillinger notes, to the real world is inevitable (*Keats*, XVii). Stillinger’s "return" is equal to Lacan’s "extraction of the objet a" or Zizek’s "drop out or sink" of the "stain" from the Real in order for reality to emerge. Or, to quote Jacques-Allain Miller’s commentary:

We understand that the covert setting aside of the object as real conditions the stabilization of reality, as "a bit of reality." But if the objet a is absent, how can it still frame reality? (see Diagram IV attached)

It is precisely because the objet a is removed from the field of reality that frames it. If I withdraw from the surface of this picture the piece I represent by a shaded square, I get what we might call a frame: a frame for a hole, but also a frame of the rest of the surface. Such a frame could be created by any window. So objet a is such a surface fragment, and it is its subtraction from reality that frames it. The subject, as barred subject -- as want-of-being -- is this hole. As being, it is nothing but the subtracted bit. Whence the equivalency of the subject and objet a.

(Miller, 28-29)

Keats’s "return" from the visionary world, Lacan’s "extraction of the objet a," Zizek’s "drop out or sink" of the "stain," and
Miller's "subtraction of reality" of the objet a are all similar to the Taoist notion of unity of the opposites. As in the story of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] and the butterfly, by subtracting the butterfly in the dream, Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] becomes Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], the person, in real life. In the dream, he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] for nobody; he is a butterfly. Only when he is awake, he is Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi] for others. So Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], the person, is defined by what he is not. Similarly, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] expresses the same notion by saying that the effectiveness of a house is derived from its being empty. In *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] says:

Thirty spokes surround the hub:
In their nothingness consists the carriage's effectiveness.
One hollows the clay and shapes it into pots:
In its nothingness consists the pot's effectiveness.
One cuts out doors and windows to make the chamber:
In their nothingness consists the chamber's effectiveness.

Therefore: what exists serves for possession.
What does not exist serves for effectiveness.

*(Tao Te Ching, 31)*

---

The Demon Eyes: *The White Snake*
As the Chinese proverb goes: "Great men think alike." Lao Tzu [Lao Zi] and the modern thinkers are thousands of years apart, but their ways of thinking are terribly similar. According to *The Book of Change* or *I Ching* of the Taoists, at certain times at certain places, certain people think or act in such a similar way that it cannot be simply regarded as coincidence. For the Taoists, this is because of the basic human instinctive response to the great Tao, which allows no logical rationalization. But for Jung, this is because of the basic human "collective unconscious" (Jung, 87). In his introduction to Wilhelm's translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung says:

In order to make this strange fact more intelligible to the reader, it must be pointed out that just as the human body shows a common anatomy over and above all racial differences, so, too, the psyche possesses a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness. I have called this substratum the **collective unconscious** [my emphasis]. This unconscious psyche, common to all mankind, does not consist merely of contents capable of becoming conscious, but of latent dispositions towards certain identical reactions. Thus the fact of the collective unconscious is simply the psychic expression of the identity of brain-structure irrespective of all racial differences. This explains the analogy, sometimes even identity, between various myth-motifs, and symbols, and the
possibility of human beings making themselves mutually understood. The various lines of psychic development start from one common stock whose roots reach back into all the strata of the past. This also explains the psychological parallelisms with animals.

(Ibid.)

Further on, Jung says that "taken purely psychologically, it means that mankind has common instincts of imagination and of action. All conscious imagination and action have been developed with these unconscious archetypal images [my emphasis] as their basis, and always remain bound up with them" (Ibid.).

Taking the Chinese legend of The White Snake in comparison with Keats's Lamia, for example, we find astonishing similarities which can be interpreted in terms of the Jungian theory of the "collective unconscious" and the Taoist notion of fusion into oneness on the ground of nonbeing. Like Keats's Lamia, the Chinese legend of The White Snake tells a similar story of a serpent woman, Lady White, falling in love with a mortal man. It is thought to go as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618-970). In the story, a man named Li spends three days with a "snake spirit" in bliss and then drops dead like water. Even though it is a fairy tale about "spirits" victimizing men, it implies the impossibility of man's search for happiness. In this sense, it is similar, to a certain degree, to Keats's Lamia in which Lycius dies when the magic of Lamia is penetrated by the "demon eyes" of Apollonius.

221
One of its earliest forms in drama is called The Three Pagodas of West Lake of the Southern Sung Dynasty (1174-1189). The hero of the drama, Syi [Xi], rescues a White Maiden who has lost her way, meets the Spirit in White, the maiden's mother, and the Spirit in Black, her grandmother. The man lives in the illusory world of the Spirit in White for a year before she decides to eat his heart and liver. As a reward for his good conscience, he is saved by the White Maiden; and, later on, a Taoist priest captures all three spirits among whom the Spirit in White is a white snake, the White Maiden a chicken, and the Spirit in Black an otter, and imprisons them under the three stone lanterns in West Lake. In this version, like the version of Tang Dynasty, the White Snake is a demon who plagues men in order to satisfy her own desires. Like the story in Burton's version of Lamia, the hero does not die.

The mature version of the legend of The White Snake is by Feng Meng Lung of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The hero, now named Syu Syan [Xu Xian], meets with the serpent woman, Lady White, accompanied by her sister Little Blue in a thunderstorm created by her magic at West Lake. Pretending to borrow an umbrella from Syu Syan [Xu Xian], Lady White insures their meeting again. Enchanted by her irresistible beauty, Syu [Xu] returns, they are betrothed, and Lady White gives him the money for the wedding. But the money is found out to have been stolen from an official treasury (through Little Blue's magic without Syu Syan's [Xu Xian's] knowing), and Syu Syan [Xu Xian] is exiled to the city of Sou Jou [Su Zhou]. Lady White follows him there and tells him that the money was left from
her late husband. Syu [Xu] believes her to be innocent, and they get married. They open a drug store and live happily. But Syu [Xu] still doubts if she is a woman. He seeks help of a priest who gives him charms to prove if she is a snake spirit. It turns out to be useless. Only when the abbot, Fa Hai (literally the Ocean of Justice) notices him while visiting Jin Shan Temple in Jen Jyang [Zhen Jiang] does Syu [Xu] realize that he is living with a white snake spirit. Now he begs Fa Hai for help. With the help of Fa Hai, Syu [Xu] gets an imperial amnesty and returns to Hangchow [Hang Zhou] where he finds Lady White. Without her knowing, he summons up a snake catcher to trap Lady White and winds up fleeing in fear when he sees Lady White turn into a tremendous white snake. Fa Hai appears and gives him the magic alms bowl to trap White while he captures Blue with incantations. Both are put at the Thunder Peak Monastery in Hangchow [Hang Zhou]. In this version, the central conflict is between Syu Syan [Xu Xian] and Lady White, emphasizing the impossibility that the man and the snake spirit can live together successfully.

The later versions keep the main plot of that of Feng Meng Lung, but the central contradiction is no longer between Syu Syan [Xu Xian] and Lady White. Now it centres on the conflict between Lady White and Fa Hai (Ocean of Justice) -- metaphorically between the daughter and the Law of the Father. The most recent version is by Tyan Han [Tian Han], one of the most famous Chinese playwrights of modern China. In his legend of The White Snake, Lady White, like Keats's Lamia, remains a snake spirit who has defied heavenly laws
(Buddhist and Taoist elements are mixed) to experience the bliss of human love. Syu [Xu] is still a weak character like Keats's Lycius. Because of his infatuation with Lady White, he continues to overcome his fear and doubts about her origin. Fa Hai, like Keats's Apollonius, still remains a "saviour." As the Father of the patriarchal household, he must act in obedience to the Law -- that each being must be true to his own nature. Like Apollonius, he does not allow any "foul dream" to invade the human psyche. Lady White's crime is her stepping out of her spiritual nature. Like Lamia, her motivation to torment men deliberately and her desire to enjoy human bliss produce suffering, fear, anxiety, and disaster in the world of man.

Different from any previous versions, Tyan's [Tian's] legend of The White Snake no longer treats Lady White as a fearsome snake spirit but a symbol of womanly warmth, intelligence, bravery, and chastity. Syu Syan [Xu Xian] is no longer a mortal victimized by his own passions and the magic of the White Snake. Their love for each other is no longer a horrifying story of a snake spirit victimizing a mortal man. Therefore, the main conflict of the drama is no longer between the lovers. Now, the abbot Fa Hai has become the villain like Apollonius. As the image of the Father, he is depicted as an instrument of feudal forces working against Lady White's search for love and freedom as a woman.

In Keats's Lamia, the central conflict of the poem is between Lamia and the philosopher, Apollonius (like the conflict between Keats's imagination and the "cold philosophy" of "consecutive
reasoning"). In the legend of *The White Snake*, the main contradiction is between Lady White and Fa Hai, symbol of the laws of a higher order. In both cases, the struggle between the two parties is a symbolic one between the daughter and the Laws of the Father. Woman as the object of man’s desire functions in the idyllic picture of the patriarchal world of the Father as nothing but a "stain" that disturbs its tranquillity and naturalness. In *Lamia*, the serpent woman as "foul dream" has to be "gone" in order for the symbolic reality to emerge — the coming back to order. This is done by subjecting the guilty snake-woman to the investigative gaze of the "demon eyes" of Apollonius who can unweave the "rainbow" (Keats, 357) and see through Lamia with his "keen, cruel, perceiving, stinging, demon eye" (Keats, 358). In sum, the male gaze of Apollonius’s "demon eyes" has the effect of a "poison" (Lacan, 116). It penetrates the magic of the snake woman, Lamia, and "poisons" her to "death" as a woman.

In "Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan talks about this kind of "demon eye" as not showing even the slightest blessing or sympathy. He tells us a little story about "envy" (invidia). It is about a little child seeing his baby brother at his mother’s breast, looking at him with such a bitter look that it seems to tear his brother to pieces; his look has the "effect of a poison" (Lacan, 116). What Lacan here tries to tell us is that the function of "envy" as gaze has the effect of a poison simply because the "appetite of the eye on the part of the person looking .... the eye
filled with voracity, the evil eye" (my emphasis)" never blesses:

It is striking, when one thinks of the universality of the function of the evil eye, that there is no trace anywhere of a good eye, of an eye that blesses. What can this mean, except that the eye carries with it the fatal function of being itself endowed -- if you will allow me to play on several registers at once -- with a power to separate. But this power to separate goes much further than distinct vision. The powers that are attributed to it, of drying up the milk of an animal on which it falls -- a belief as widespread in our time as in any other, and in the most civilized countries -- of bringing with it disease or misfortune -- where can we better picture this power than in invidia (envy)?


Maybe Lacan is too radical in saying that "there is no trace anywhere of a good eye, of an eye that blesses." But it is true, at least, in Keats's Lamia and in the legend of The White Snake. Apollonius's "evil eyes" not only have the "power to separate" the lovers but also the "fatal function" of bringing misfortune and disaster, especially to Lycius.

In the legend of The White Snake, Fa Hai's "evil eyes" are the most evil of all. Not only do they have the "power to separate" the lovers, Lady White and Syu Syan [Xu Xian], but they also have the
"fatal function" of bringing "misfortune" to their son by imprisoning Lady White under the Thunder Peak Pagoda in West Lake one month after the baby's birth. Like Apollonius who has the foreknowledge of Lamia's appearance in Corinth, Fa Hai has the foresight of the serpent woman, Lady White in Jen Jyang [Zhen Jiang] even before they meet. Immediately after their marriage, Fa Hai, sitting on the mattress at the Golden Mountain Temple, chants:

**Fa Hai** I laugh at life, for I see
Men are lost and so unfree.
I teach the true way to be --
Turning towards serenity.

I am the old priest Fa Hai, who lives at Golden Mountain. Recently, there came to Jen Jyang [Zhen Jiang] one Su Jen White [Bai Suzhen]. I myself investigated her, and I have found out that she is really the incarnation of a snake spirit who has existed for a thousand years. She seduced Syu Syan [Xu Xian] of Hangchow [Hang Zhou], married him, and began to work in a herb shop selling medicines there. This Buddhist's land all around the south of the river has no place for an evil demon spirit who has come to spoil and poison everything. In all conscience, I must rescue Syu Syan [Xu Xian] and destroy this White woman....
Fa Hai vows to "destroy" Lady White because, as "an evil demon spirit," she renders everything in "this Buddhist land" uncanny, unnatural, supernatural, and loaded with fear and threatening possibilities. Like Keats's Lamia, as the "stain" in the idyllic picture, Lady White functions as the gaze of the Other causing fear and anxiety in the subject. In order to conquer this fear, Fa Hai has to subject her to the male gaze in order to investigate her dark origin.

In scene iv, "Persuading Syu Syan [Xu Xian]," Fa Hai visits Syu Syan [Xu Xian] and tells him that his wife "is a demon snake" who "has existed for a thousand years" (Tyan [Tian], 71). Syu Syan [Xu Xian] refuses and says: "It is a lie!" (Tyan [Tian], 72). But Fa Hai says:

Fa Hai Young scholar Syu, I can see that you are hopelessly in love with her, and so it is useless for me to speak any further. But at Dragonboat Festival time, you should ask her to drink a few cups of yellow wine, and then you will see her turn into her true self, and you will know that I have not been lying to you.

(Ibid.)

But in scene v, "The Wine Incident," Syu Syan [Xu Xian], like
Lycius investigating Lamia by asking about her "name" and relatives, attempts to find out if Lady White is really a snake demon of a thousand years old by asking her to drink some yellow wine (with cow gallbladder powder in it). Of course, she refuses to drink by giving some excuses. But, remembering Fa Hai’s words, Syu [Xu] insists that she drink to prove that she is not a "snake spirit":

Syu [Xu] Not long ago, someone said to me that you were a ...

White I am a what?

Syu [Xu] You are -- the incarnation of a snake spirit who has existed for a thousand years. And if you drink the yellow wine, you will turn into your true self.

(Tyan [Tian], 75)

Lady White is so shocked by Syu’s [Xu’s] words that she can hardly remain calm. On second thought, she thinks that her power should be strong enough to stand a cup of wine after a thousand years of spiritual practice and attainment. She drinks the first cup, and then the second, and then the third. She is drunk and feels great pain. Syu Syan [Xu Xian] carries her to bed and goes to the herb shop to prepare a potion to sober her. He returns and puts the potion on the table because he does not want to wake her up. Just as he was about to leave he hears Fa Hai’s voice:
Fa Hai offstage

Syu Syan [Xu Xian]! Behind that bed screen is the potion that will sober you! Get ready to see your wife as she is really is!

Syu [Xu] Ah!

I can hear old Fa Hai say to me
White is a demon snake of subtlety - I can’t just wake her to see!
Yet my doubts move me so strongly,
Now I will call my wife to me.

There is a moan behind the screen

Be brave, my dear, I am coming to help you. He opens the screen, and cries out Oh, no! He falls.

(Tyan [Tian], 78-9)

Like Lycius, by attempting to investigate the serpent woman, Syu [Xu] manufactures his own death! But unlike Lycius, Syu [Xu] is saved by his loving wife who risks her own life in stealing the life-giving mushroom from the Holy Mountain to bring him back to life.

After that accident, Syu [Xu] refuses to talk to her. In order to do away with all his doubts about the white snake, Lady White turns her white satin into a silver snake and makes it coil around
the ceiling in the kitchen. She invites him to see it and explains to him that the snake is an omen of good luck to the house. Instantly Syu's doubts about Lady White are cleared. But Fa Hai would not leave her alone. He tells Syu Syan [Xu Xian] that the silver snake in his kitchen was a piece of satin which his wife "made to look like a snake by means of her sorcery" (Tyan [Tian], 91). Fa Hai says to Syu Syan [Xu Xian]:

If your wife were not a demon, how could she do a thing like that?

(Ibid.)

On learning the truth about his wife, Syu [Xu] feels devastated and decides to stay at the Golden Mountain and "become a Buddhist" to save his life.

Lady White, because of her strong love for both her husband and her impending baby, wages a war against Fa Hai to get her husband back. She loses the battle and returns to Hangchow [Hang Zhou] in order to give birth to her baby. Syu [Xu] escapes from the Golden Mountain and reunites with his wife, and they promise never to part with each other again. But, according to the Law of the Father, Lady White, like Lamia as "foul dream," has to be "gone." So after the birth of the baby, Fa Hai appears and demands that Syu [Xu] put Lady White into the Golden Bowl. Pointing at Fa Hai, Lady White shouts:
Fa Hai, you thief! Don't you dare laugh! Do you think that the love between my husband and me can be contained in this Golden Bowl?

Fa Hai, we don't need your mirth.
All your prayers just teach you ways to slay,
I am in this bowl today
But I love Syu [Xu] in the same way.

(Tyan [Tian], 118)

Fa Hai gazes at Lady White with his evil eyes and gives his order:

Wei, Two, listen to my order: place this white snake under Lei Feng Tower. Unless the water runs dry from West Lake or unless Lei Feng Tower falls, she will never be able to come out again.

(Tyan [Tian], 118)

Just as Lamia disappears after her magic is penetrated by the "demon eyes" of Apollonius, Lady White has to be put "under Lei Feng Tower" by Fa Hai in order for the Father to restore the natural order of the patriarchal household. The tale of Lamia and the legend of Lady White both demonstrate the dilemma and the inevitable penance of the feminine within a patriarchal culture. The question of whether Lamia or Lady White (woman) will ever have her own being independent of the fantasies and prohibitions of the
male unconscious finds no answer in both stories. The only possible answer provided for the feminine in both cases is that Lamia or Lady White will have no ultimate escape from the gaze of the "evil eyes" of the Father.
The poetic development of John Keats from an apprentice poet to a mature poet parallels the Lacanian child's growing up from the imaginary (mirror stage) to the symbolic (entry into language). Keats achieves his own poetic identity, basically, through two stages: one is his imaginary identification with the gaze of the Other; the other is his symbolic identification with it. The basic difference between imaginary and symbolic identification is that imaginary identification is identification with the (mirror) image which the subject "would like to be"; symbolic identification, by contrast, is identification with the alienated, imaginary other: the image of his double into which the subject has put his identity.
outside. To quote Zizek's summary:

The relation between imaginary and symbolic identification -- between the ideal ego [Idealich] and the ego-ideal [Ich-Ideal] -- is -- to use the distinction made by Jacques-Alain Miller (in his unpublished seminar) -- that between 'constituted' and 'constitutive' identification: to put it simply, imaginary identification is identification with the image representing 'what we would like to be,' and symbolic identification, identification with the very place from where we are being observed, from where we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love.

(Zizek, *The Sublime Object*, 105)

In the Lacanian theory of the gaze, the imaginary identification is identification with the image reflected in the mirror or in the gaze of the (M)other; symbolic identification originates in the gaze itself "from where" we are being looked at, and "from where" we gaze at ourselves. In other words, at the imaginary stage, the gaze is still on the side of the subject looking, which is very much like that of Derrida's; at the symbolic stage, by contrast, the gaze is on the side of the object, the invisible point "from where" the subject is observed, and "from where" the subject experiences what Lacan calls "seeing oneself seeing oneself." In Taoist terms, the symbolic identification is the identification
between the subject and the object, being and nonbeing, the conscious and the unconscious. It is the place where the unity of opposites and the interfusion of subjectivity occur.

John Keats's development as a poet was self-willed and self-consciously planned, and it parallels his poetic theory on identity, subjectivity, and imagination. In a very self-conscious and determined way, Keats sets out to create himself as a poet: that is, create his poetic self through writing. As Hartman says: "self-identity is not possible without speech" (Hartman, xi). For Keats, poetic identity, that is, to call oneself a poet, is not possible without poetry. Within a very short period of time, Keats progressed from an apprentice poet, imitating poetry's voices, to a mature poet with a strong poetic voice of his own -- becoming the subject of his own poetic discourse.

Keats's imitation of great poets such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser can be considered as his imaginary identification with them in certain features: for example, their poetic style, diction, or their fame, their name; more significantly, his symbolic identification with them is achieved through his putting his identity outside into the image of his double, or through what Keats himself calls the "annulling self" (Letters, I, 323) by filling some other Body" (Letters, I, 387) and thus bringing out its poetic nature:

As to the poetical character itself ... the camelion Poet ... is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence;
because he has no Identity ... the poet has none; no identity....

(Keats, *Letters*, I, 386-87)

Keats's denial of the poet's self-hood contrasts sharply with Wordsworth's imposition of his own identity upon his readers. As a non-Wordsworthian poet, Hirst argues, Keats "resembles the chameleon, because he changes his identity with the subject he imagines or describes so that he is left with no identity of his own" (Hirst, 45). In Zizek's words, by putting "his identity outside" into the "image of his double" -- the symbolic identification with the gaze of the Other, Keats dies "into [the] life" of the Other, and achieves his own poetic identity while claiming "no identity" of his own. It is through this process of the "annulling self" and the "dying into [the] life" of the gaze of the Other that Keats is able to "see as a God sees" (Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion*, 368).

Dying into Life: Lacan and Keats

According to Lacan, the human self comes into self-knowledge at the mirror stage when the child sees its image in the mirror or in the mother's gaze and voice (as gaze). For the Lacanian child, these "images" provide the foundation for his later identifications with the Other. At this stage, the child is in an illusory unity
with the Other (Mother). Lacan calls this stage the imaginary in which the misrecognition of the self as Other takes place. Furthermore, during this period the child does not recognize the third term, that is, the existence of the Father; for he can only imagine that he is the only object of the Mother's desire.

In order for the human subject to come into being, the Lacanian child has to break away from the illusory unity with the Mother and enter into the Lacanian symbolic -- the register incorporating Law, Name, and Language of the Father. This process,

... the first social imperative of renunciation, inaugurat[es], through ... castration of the child's original desire, both the necessity of repression and the process of symbolic substitution of objects of desire ... While the child is learning how to speak, signifiers of incestuous desire are repressed, become unspeakable, and the desire is displayed onto substitutive signifiers of desire. This is what the Oedipus complex mythically, schematically, accounts for: the constitution of the Symbolic, through the coincidence of the child's introduction into language and of the constitution of his (linguistic) unconscious.

(Felman, 104)

Now the child becomes a human subject of and in language, the subject determined by the symbolic order: a system of arbitrary
differential signifiers. From his imaginary identification with the (M)other to his symbolic identification with the Father, the Lacanian child dies "into [the] life" of the Other and becomes the subject of and in language. This psychoanalytical process of Lacan finds its parallel in Keats's development as a poet from his imaginary identification with the great poets to his symbolic identification with them. That is, after all his trials as an apprentice poet, Keats acquires language and speaks in an elite discourse -- a poet speaking the "Unconscious of the Father." In this sense, like the Tao which teaches without words, the "Unconscious," structured like language, is spoken without itself speaking.

In his effort to imitate his predecessors during his apprenticeship, Keats, when writing Endymion, vows that "I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry" (Letters, I, 169-70) as "a test, a trial of [his] Powers of Imagination and chiefly of [his] invention" (Letters, I, 169). While appropriating the language of his masters, Keats no longer merely fashions pastiches (Gittings, 43). Instead, he creates something of his own imagination. In his letter to Hessey, exactly one year later, he expands on the nature of the trial:

The Genius of Poetry ... cannot be matured by law & precept ... That which is creative must create itself -- In Endymion, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksand, & the
rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped
a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice.
(Keats, Letters, I, 374)

Even though in the course of his apprenticeship he decidedly goes
on to borrow from and emulate other poets, he writes as a poet with
full subjectivity and creates a voice of his own, for he believes
"That If Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it
had better not come at all" (Letters, I, 65). And now, after the
writing of Endymion, Keats's imagination matures from the
"imagination of a boy" to "the imagination of a man" (Endymion,
preface). As subject of and in language, the poet is no longer in
a narcissistic imaginary identification with the images. Through
his dying into the life of the Other, such as the life of a "rose ...
[with] sensations" (Letters, II, 102), he acquires a self-
awareness or self-consciousness of the self as Other. In his
discussion of Keats's "recurrant wish to lose the self in being"
(52) in connection with Keats's discussion of the rose that is
capable of self-awareness and of "enjoy[ing] itself" (Letters, II,
102), John Barnard says:

This gives the basis for the characteristic tactile, visual
and auditory effects in the poetry, and the preference for
metaphors of fullness, of a selfhood bursting with its own
identity. Sensation then is linked with Keatsian empathy.
Being taken up into sensation, into something deeply other
to the self, takes Keats a long way from simple sense experience ... the imaginative experience therefore started from direct experience, but its meaning went beyond mere day-dreaming. It was a kind of thinking through Images (my emphasis).

(Barnard, 52)

Keats's "thinking through images" corresponds both with Lacan's notion of the imaginary identification in which the subject would like to be that "image" (like the human self in the mirror stage), and with his notion of the symbolic identification in which the subject becomes that "image" as gaze, the place from which the subject is being observed, and from which the subject looks at himself. This typical Keatsian process of "thinking through images" also corresponds with Jung's notion of imagining through "unconscious archetypal images" (my emphasis) when he talks about the "collective unconscious": "Taken purely psychologically, it means that mankind has common instincts of imagination and action. All conscious imagination [thinking] and action have been developed with these unconscious archetypal images as their basis, and always remain bound up with them" (Jung, 87). Here both Keats and Jung believe that the process of "thinking" or "imagination" through "images" is a process capable of making the unconscious conscious, a mystical union. In this, Keats and Jung are not unlike Lacan. Boothby, writing about Lacan's discussion of the jouissance evident in Bernini's St. Teresa, notes "the most enigmatic moment in
Lacan's thought: the insistence on a union beyond the imaginable of flesh and word" (Boothby, 228). No doubt, this is also similar to the Taoist notion of the union of opposites on the ground of nonbeing.

To See as a God Sees

Keats not only thinks "through images" but also writes poetry like paintings. He can "see, and sing, by [his] own eyes inspired" (Keats, "Ode to Psyche," 276). He can imagine himself "among the greatest" (Letters, I, 374) by seeing himself reflected in the poetical picture (mirror) created through his sympathetic imagination. Here Keats is actually experiencing an illusion of seeing himself seeing himself as a poet "among the greatest" (Ibid.). Lacan defines this as the very illusion of perfect self-mirroring that characterizes the Cartesian philosophical tradition of the subject of self-reflection "as seeing oneself seeing oneself" (Lacan, The Four fundamental Concepts, 74). But what happens here in the discord between the gaze as object and the subject's eye? The whole point of Lacan's theory of the gaze is to oppose the self-sufficient self-mirroring, and the gaze as object must function as a blot, a "stain" conceived at an invisible point at which "something appears to be missing from the representation, and thus takes on a 'terrifying alterity' that prohibits the subject from seeing itself in the representation"
The answer to the question is that the antinomy of the gaze as object and the subject's eye is concealed by the enchanting object through its power of fascination by which the subject sees in the object its own gaze. In Zizek's words, here the gaze of the Other is "domesticated, 'gentrified'; instead of the gaze erupting like a traumatic, disharmonious blot, we have the illusion of "seeing ourselves seeing," of seeing the gaze itself. In a way, we could say that the function of fascination is precisely to blind us to the fact that the other is already gazing at us" (Zizek, 114).

In the process of writing both *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats emphasizes the importance of deep gazing as a means of achieving intuitive knowledge or self-knowledge through the interfusion between the subject and the object which is the cause of desire. As John Jones notes, both poems "share a thematically central element of deep gazing into faces; and the moment of deep gazing is the moment when Keats's self-knowledge, the distinguishing mark of both fragments, shows itself" (Jones, *John Keats's Dreams*, 109). Here Jones's "moment of deep gazing" through which "Keats's self-knowledge ... shows itself" is actually the "suspended moment" when the subject is shocked into "self-consciousness" by means of a "stain" as the gaze of the Other. In Taoist terms, this "moment of deep gazing" into "self-knowledge" is the moment when the subject achieves chih, sudden enlightenment or intuitive knowledge, through sympathetic imagination on the ground of nonbeing. But in psychoanalytical discourse, it is a "moment,"
to paraphrase Felman, Keats knows that he knows, but does not know what it is that he knows of this link (Swann, 81).

In *Hyperion*, Keats imaginatively identifies himself with Apollo, the God of verse, and through him he tries to "read" the face of Mnemosyne, the Goddess of memory, through his deep gazing. But in *The Fall of Hyperion*, the narrator is changed from the third person to the first person, which could indicate the Lacanian child's (Keats as a poet's) entry into the symbolic world of Language, Law, Name of the Father, and becoming the speaking-subject -- poet speaking poetry. In *Hyperion*, Keats is outside the picture, but in *The Fall of Hyperion*, he puts himself into the picture; and through his symbolic identification with Apollo, Keats, gazing at Mnemosyne, becomes the God-poet speaking poetry. With the vision of a God, now he can "see as a God sees":

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

(Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion*, 368)

The Identity of No-Identity
Only by identifying his gaze with the gaze of the transcendent Other (Apollo) can Keats achieve the vision of a God. And only through his entry into the world of the symbolic -- the world of Language, Law, and Name of the Father -- can the Keatsian poet acquire language and become the speaking subject speaking poetry.

In the opening passage of *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats makes it clear that it is the poetic "Word" that shapes the poetic identity:

> For poesy alone can tell her name.
> With the fine spell of words alone can save
> Imagination from the sable chain
> And dumb enchantment.

*(Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion*, 361)*

Through the mediation of words -- the Symbolic -- the Keatsian apprentice poet (like the Lacanian child) in his imaginary identification and narcissistic involvement with the great poets (Mother) is saved from an unself-conscious existence in the world of illusion, becomes the subject of his own discourse, and is thus able to write his poems of desire with the full-throated voice of the mature poet. This process of losing his own voice in order to speak the "Unconscious of the Father" is very much similar to the Taoist notion of teaching without words. Like Tao, the "Unconscious," structured like language, is always outside. Furthermore, like the Tao, it can only be spoken of. In this sense, both the "Unconscious" and Tao teach without words.
Even though Keats strives to achieve his own poetic identity, his identity as a poet is but a paradox of identity. His identity is achieved through his losing his own identity in the subjects he imagines or describes. Like the Lacanian child who, through his dying into the life of the Father (the Symbolic), achieves his own identity as a subject of and in language, Keats achieves his identity as a poet speaking his own poetry through his dying into the life of the Father/poet (such as Milton after whom he models himself, especially in his writing of Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion). In fact, what Keats is striving for is the identity of no-identity or the "impersonal personality" (Liu, 125) in poetry.

The famous Chinese literary critic Wang Guo-wei compares this "identity of no-identity" or the "impersonal personality" to the concept of "the world without an 'I'" in poetry. He says:

> There is a world with an "I" and there is a world without an "I." ... In the world with an "I," it is I who look at objects, and therefore everything is tinged with my colour. In the world without an "I," it is one object looking at other objects, and therefore one no longer knows which is "I" and which is 'object.'

(qtd. in Xu Tiaofu, 1)

Wang Guowei's world with an "I" is a subjective world whereas the world without an "I" is an objective world. In the former world, as Liu comments, "the poets look at external objects through their
subjective emotions, whereas in the latter world they identify with the objects they are contemplating. In the former case, their personality is obviously present in their poems, while in the latter case there is no sign of their personality, yet the poems cannot be called totally impersonal, since they embody a personal vision. The world without an "I" should be understood as self-transcendence, not self-extinction, for if the self has really become extinct, then who is writing the poem?" (Liu, 125). It is obvious that, according to Wang Guowei's theory, Wordsworth belongs to the World with an "I" while Keats belongs to the world without an "I." In the former world, the poet as subject is speaking man (subject) to man (object); in the latter, the poet is simply speaking poetry without any effort of imposing his own personality on the other, therefore "annulling" his own "self" through the identification between and the interfusion of the subject and object. The opposition between the world with an "I" and the world without an "I" parallels the antinomy between the subject's eye and the gaze as object in Lacanian discourse. In the former world, the gaze is on the side of the subject looking; in the latter, the gaze is on the side of the object. In other words, the former world is actually an imaginary world while the latter is a symbolic world. And it is in this world without an "I" that the Keatsian poet acquires language through his dying into the life of the Father -- the Symbolic world of Language, Law, and Name.

Keats's famous remarks about his identifying with a billiard ball or a sparrow and about his being the "most unpoetic of any
thing in existence, because he has no Identity" (Keats, Letters, I, 386-7) are remarkably similar to the famous Chinese poet Su Shi’s [Su Shi’s or Su Dongpo’s] (1037-1101) poem about a painter’s identification with the bamboos he painted:

When Yuke [Wen Tong, 1019-1079] painted bamboos,
He saw only bamboos but no man;
Not only did he see no man,
But he had left his dissolved body,
His body transformed with the bamboos,
Producing endless limpidity and freshness.
(qtd. in J. Y. Liu, 126)

Like Keats, the painter can identify with the subjects he imagines or describes or paints because he has no personality of his own, and his body is dissolved into the body of the picture: the painter puts himself into the picture. This inner principle of dynamic harmony seized by the artist is achieved through the interpenetration between Nature and Man, and this invisible process of communion with the spirit of the cosmos, which is fundamental to the Chinese art, is the action of Tao. In the following two extremely well-known Chinese poems, the identities of the poets are "dissolved" into their poems:

Deer Enclosure
[On] empty mountains, not seeing people;
Only hear people's talk echo.
Reflected sunlight enters deep woods,
Again shines upon the green moss.

Wang Wei (701-761)

River Snow

[From] a thousand mountains, birds' flight ceases.
[On] a myriad paths, people's footprints vanish.
[In] a solitary boat, a rain-cloaked,
straw-hatted old man
Alone fishes the cold river's snow.

Liu Zongyuan (773-819)
(qtd. in J.Y. Liu, 122)

These two poems are impersonal. They do not really express any personal emotions. Like statues, they simply present the objective reality of things. This objective world is what the critic Wang Wei calls "the world without an 'I'[wu wo zhi jing]."

In the works of John Keats, we can find many similar examples of impersonal poetry. In "The Eve of St. Agnes," Keats presents a statuesque picture of the scene on St. Agnes' Eve in the opening stanza of the poem:

St. Agnes' Eve -- Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp’d trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman’s fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem’d taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin’s picture, while his prayer he saith

......
The sculptur’d dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison’d in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb ora’ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

(Keats, 229)

This scene of the cold reality of Madeline’s castle, the streets, the chapel with "sculptur’d dead," and the distinct visual images of the "owl," the "hare," "the beadsman’s fingers," his "rosary" and "breath," the vapour of the burning incense, the "censer," and the "virgin’s picture" (Keats, 229) are depicted as charged with a sinister atmosphere; but they do so without any apparent interference from the poet. The reader or viewer is directly confronted with the objective reality.

In Hyperion, Keats creates a "natural sculpture" in poetry. In his description of Saturn, Keats writes:
Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

(Keats, 248)

This is an objective painting of the fallen God without any personal emotions involved. It is a sculpture in poetry or the fusion of poetry with sculpture. In his comment on Keats's "sculpture" of Saturn in Hyperion, Aske says that Keats's "'natural sculpture' to which the immobile figures of Saturn and Thea are compared (I, 86) recalls Hazlitt's comment that the main figures in Paradise Lost 'convey to us the ideas of sculpture'" (Aske, 89). Of course, like teacher, like student. Keats's imitation even surpasses the teacher's. According to Richard Woodhouse, Hyperion "is that in poetry which the Elgin and Egyptian Marbles are in Sculpture" (Ian Jack, 161). For Byron, it is "a fine monument" (Redpath, 441). De Quincey imagined the poem representing "the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of a Grecian temple enriched with Grecian sculpture" (De Quincey, Collected Writings, XI, 389).

In the preceding passages from Keats's poems, the personality of the poet never intrudes upon the scene. This is also true with Shelley's poem "A Song":

251
A widow bird sate mourning her love,
    Upon a winter bough.
The frozen wind crept on above,
    The freezing stream below.
There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
    No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air

    Except the mill-wheel's sound.

(Shelley, The Works, vol. 3, 326)

Here Shelley presents an objective reality of winter sadness. Even though winter may be identified with death, the poet's personal emotion of sadness or pessimism is not involved. His function as a poet is simply that of a vehicle through which the spiritual universe finds its voice.

The paradox of impersonal personality in poetry is best illustrated by Eliot. On the one hand, Eliot says: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not an expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things" (Eliot, 10-11). On the other hand, he also says: "A man may, hypothetically, compose a number of fine passages or even whole poems which could each give satisfaction, and yet not be a great poet, unless we felt them to be united by one significant, consistent and developing
personality" (Ibid.).

It is obvious that, for Eliot, the poet must first possess a personality so that he can escape from it. Like the Keatsian process of achieving the poetic identity, the Eliotic poet has to lose his identity (being impersonal in poetry) in order to become a great poet with his own identity: a Keatsian process of dying into the life of a poet.

The concept of "impersonal personality" in poetry is actually similar to Keats's concept of "negative capability," which is the capability of "being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats, *Letters*, I, 193-94). To be "impersonal" in poetry means to be objective without any "irritable" reaching after "fact and reason" because "poetry," as Yan Yu remarks, "involves a separate kind of meaning [or interest], which is not concerned with reason" (Liu, 126).

On the artistic level, the achievement of poetic identity involves a Lacanian process of developing from the imaginary identification with the great poets to the symbolic identification with them. In other words, in order for the poet to achieve "impersonal personality," he must, as Liu says: "first get rid of [his] own personality, then assume the personality of an ancient poet, and finally discard this second personality and achieve an impersonal personality" (Liu, 129).

In his emphasis on personality, learning, convention, tradition, technique, and imitation of ancient poets, the Chinese critic, Ye Xie (1627-1703) says:
One who writes poetry must see where the ancients placed mandates on themselves, where they focused their eyes, where they set their goals, where they commanded their words, where they started with their hands -- none of which may be treated casually. He must thoroughly remove his own original visage, as a physician treats a chronic disease: first completely purging the accumulated filth to put the pure emptiness in order, then gradually filling it with the learning, judgement, spirit, and reason of the ancients. After a long time, he must be able to remove the visage of the ancients; only then can the mind of a master craftsman emerge.

(Liu, 129)

Like Ye Xie, Eliot also emphasizes the importance of tradition as well as the individual talent. Even though they are about two hundred years apart in age, they both believe that tradition is the father of the poet: it needs both continuity and rebirth. For Ye Xie, "one who writes poetry must first ... thoroughly remove his own original visage" and then "remove the visage of the ancients" in order for the "master" poet to "emerge". It is obvious that this process parallels the Lacanian child’s development from his illusory identification with the "visage"/ image (gaze) of the (M)other to the his symbolic identification with the Father: the "emerge[ence]" of the human subject in and of language. For Eliot, there is no absolute originality in poetry that owes nothing to the
ancients and that "the most individual parts of [a poet's] works may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most rigorously" (Eliot, 4).

John Keats's development from an apprentice poet to a real poet with a distinct poetic identity parallels the process of Ye Xie as well as that of Eliot. From his writing of lyrical poems to the epics, from his imitating of the "dead poets" such as Shakespeare and Milton (especially in Hyperion) to his own "soul-making," from his voicelessness in language to his "full-throated ease" of the nightingale, and from his "blindness" in searching for his identity in the gaze (image) of the (M)other in Endymion to his "vision" of a God in The Fall of Hyperion, Keats emerges as a poet with "the learning, judgment, spirit, and reason" (Liu, 129) of his own and matures as "a master craftsman" (Ibid.) among the great poets of all time.
NOTES


2. The spelling of most of the Chinese names is the same as the original in the sources. However, names such as Ma Chih-yuan, Li P’o, Lao Tzu, etc. are given the modern Chinese spelling in brackets: Ma Chih-yuan [Ma Zhiyuan], Li P’o [Li Bai], and Lao Tzu [Lao Zi].

3. Here the terms "oral" and "phallic" are used in the metaphor of film-making. The "oral" stage of film-making is simply to shoot an event and the spectators can "devour" it with their eyes, and the montage has no function in organizing the narrative tensions. At the "phallic" stage, the shooting of an idyllic scene is "vertically" doubled with something as a stain that is "sticking out" causing the subject's desire to know what is "repressed" underside within the picture. The best reference is Slavoj Zizek's *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 89-90.

Works Cited


257


-------- *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists*. London, 1908.


Markiewicz, Henryk. "Ut Pictura Poesis ....A History of the Topos


Wang, Wei. Poems by Wang Wei. Trans. and ed. Chang Yin-nan and 263


Bibliography


Addison, Joseph. The Spectator (1712). No. 416.


Caldwell, James Ralston. John Keats's Fancy: The Effect on Keats of the Psychology of His Day. 1945; rpt. New York: Octagon,
1965.


Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists.

London, 1908.


1969.


Little, Sylvia E.P.. "'Passion's Passing Bell': Dying into life in 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,' and


272


Ye, Xie. *Yuan Shi (Original Poetry)*. in Ding Fubao [1915] n.d..


Appendix I

Diagram I

HEAVEN

LAKE

WIND

MOUNTAIN

EARTH

Fig. 1 Trigrams surrounding the Taichi

Diagram II

275
Appendix II

Diagram III

Diagram IV