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# KEATS AND HÖLDERLIN

PAUL DE MAN

THE parallel between Keats and Hölderlin has often been suggested—so often that it tends to be taken for granted. Mr. Hamburger, in his introduction to translations of some of Hölderlin's poems, refers to it as a matter of course,<sup>1</sup> and it has found its way even into such semipopularizing works as Gilbert Highet's *The Classical Tradition*.<sup>2</sup> The fact is, however, that the only published work on record entirely devoted to this comparison was written by an obscure German Oberlehrer in 1896,<sup>3</sup> when the major part of Hölderlin's poetry was still entirely unknown, even in Germany.<sup>4</sup>

As the understanding and interpretation of Hölderlin has developed, his stature has steadily grown, to the point where he appears as one of the central figures in modern literature. Evaluation of Keats has shown a similar—though, of course, less dramatic—upward trend. A comparison may thus find a basis in the conviction of their common greatness, but it must necessarily remain confined to an enumeration of thematic analogies. The two contemporary poets were, of course, unaware of each other's existence and have no specific literary or philosophical sources in common; certainly, their respective Hellenisms are all too individual to serve as a starting point for comparison. And the language differences makes any comparison of texture a highly hazardous undertaking, which would have to be preceded by extensive comparative theories concerning English and German poetical techniques.

The most immediate value of a Keats-Hölderlin parallel is a clarification of Keats's major themes, which, as divergent opinions in recent Keats criticism well show, are far from being unambiguously defined.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hamburger, *Hölderlin* (New York, 1952), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (New York and London, 1949), p. 378.

<sup>3</sup> G. Wenzel, *Hölderlin und Keats als geistesverwandte Dichter* (Magdeburg, 1896). There exists an Edinburgh dissertation, G. Guder, "A Comparison of Hölderlin and Keats in their Respective Backgrounds as Romantic Poets" (1938), to which I have not had access.

<sup>4</sup> The first reliable complete and critical edition of Hölderlin was begun by Norbert von Hellingrath, who died in 1916, and completed in 1923 by Ludwig von Pigenot and Friedrich Seebass. This edition, as well as the later one by Frank Zinkernagel (Insel Verlag), is now superseded by the definitive Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe, edited under the direction of Friedrich Beissner, of which five volumes have been published since 1946. Interest in Hölderlin has only just begun in the United States, as is clear enough from the article by P. M. Mitchell, "Hölderlin in England und Amerika," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* (1950), pp. 131-146. Probably the most noteworthy addition since is by R. L. Beare, "Patmos, dem Landgrafen von Homburg," *Germanic Review*, XXVIII (1953), 5-22.

For this purpose Hölderlin's almost blinding clarity can be of great assistance. After a period of searching growth and experimentation, his later work succeeds in saying what he had to say with a directness and simplicity on which no discursive paraphrase can ever hope to improve. As Martin Heidegger's studies show,<sup>5</sup> this part of Hölderlin's work, from 1800 up to his insanity in 1806, allows for entirely internal exegesis. The burden of comprehension lies in the reader's capacity to relive the spiritual experience, which is stated with the greatest possible clarity. Keats, on the other hand, never had the opportunity to reach a degree of control over his poetic and spiritual impulses which allowed him to speak with full assurance.

His work, seen as a whole, tends to divide itself into two parts: the poems in which he accepts a limited theme and occasionally achieves a high degree of formal perfection; and those in which he tries to say everything but generally fails to maintain control of the overall texture. "The Eve of St. Agnes" or the ode "To Autumn" are clear examples of the first category, while *Endymion* and both versions of *Hyperion* undoubtedly belong to the second. Very little remains to be said about the former works, but the latter remain—and are bound to remain forever—objects of endless speculation. Whenever Keats criticism has gone astray, it has been in trying to force a thematic unity on the entire work. Some have tried to annex the entire "obscure" zone of Keats's mind by making it appear as mere sensation, on the most superficial level of the term; Mr. Newell Ford's reading of *Endymion*<sup>6</sup> is the most recent example of this trend. Others have searched for metaphysical complexity in purely narrative poems like "The Eve of St. Agnes"; Mr. Wasserman's book is the latest product of this school of thought.<sup>7</sup> Would it not be preferable to allow for the existence of a major and a minor Keats and to classify and evaluate the works accordingly? One would, of course, have to argue at some length as to where to locate such border cases as *Lamia* or even the odes.

In this study I shall undertake a close examination of the complex themes of Keats's two most ambitious works, *Endymion* and *Hyperion*, in the light of Hölderlin's treatment of similar themes. The similarity in title between Hölderlin's and Keats's *Hyperion* is misleading. In the general development of their respective work, Hölderlin's novel, *Hyperion*, corresponds to Keats's *Endymion*. After an examination of these products of the two poets' preparatory periods, we shall proceed to their maturation, to a comparison of the two versions of Keats's *Hy-*

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt, 1951).

<sup>6</sup> Newell Ford, "The Meaning of Fellowship with Essence in *Endymion*," *PMLA*, LXII (1947), 1061-1076; "Endymion—A Neo-Platonic Allegory?," *ELH*, XIV (1947), 67-76; *The Prefigurative Imagination of John Keats* (Stanford, 1951).

<sup>7</sup> Earl Wasserman, *The Finer Tone* (Baltimore, 1952).

*perion* with the three fragments of Hölderlin's *Empedokles*. Beyond *Empedokles*, the comparison would be both meaningless and somehow unfair to Keats.

Hölderlin was more fortunate than Keats in the choice of his first master; as an example of literary excellence, Schiller is certainly preferable to Leigh Hunt. His well-known influence on Hölderlin appears very clearly in the early *Hyperion* fragment, generally referred to as the *Thaliafragment*. It was written in 1793 and appeared in Schiller's *Neue Thalia*, IV (last volume). The theoretical statement that introduces the text is very similar in tone to Hölderlin's later philosophical fragments.

Es gibt zwei Ideale unseres Daseins: einen Zustand der höchsten Einfalt, wo unsre Bedürfnisse mit sich selbst, und mit unsren Kräften, und mit allem, womit wir in Verbindung stehen, *durch die bloße Organisation der Natur*, ohne unser Zuthun, gegenseitig zusammenstimmen, und einen Zustand der höchsten Bildung, wo dasselbe statt finden würde bei unendlich vervielfältigten und verstärkten Bedürfnissen und Kräften, *durch die Organisation, die wir uns selbst zu geben im Stande sind*. Die exzentrische Bahn, die der Mensch, im Allgemeinen und Einzelnen, von einem Punkte (der mehr oder weniger reinen Einfalt) zum andern (der mehr oder weniger vollendeten Bildung) durchläuft, scheint sich, *nach ihren wesentlichen Richtungen*, immer gleich zu sein [*Fragment von Hyperion*, II, 53].<sup>8</sup>

That Hölderlin should have put this key passage at the very beginning of his first important work is an impressive example, even at this early date, of the self-exegesis to which we have alluded. For it is indeed an accurate and complete summary of the novel that follows—not just the *Thaliafragment* but the final *Hyperion*, written in 1796—and contains several of the themes which will remain central through *Empedokles* and the later work. The two terms *Einfalt* and *Bildung* correspond to Schiller's "naiv" and "sentimental." In Hölderlin, the literary concepts become live experience. Simplicity is the supreme value, the state of complete innocence where a spontaneous friendship exists between man and the world that surrounds him, associated, in individual life, with the condition of childhood:

Da ich ein Knabe war,  
Rettet' ein Gott mich oft  
Vom Geschrei und der Ruthe der Menschen,  
Da spielt' ich sicher und gut  
Mit den Blumen des Hains,  
Und die Lüftchen des Himmels  
Spielten mit mir.

(II, 47)

Simplicity, *Einfalt*, then, is the starting point of all existence, an entirely self-sufficient and complete state in itself: "Ja! ein göttlich

<sup>8</sup> All quotations from Hölderlin are from the six-volume edition begun by Norbert von Hellingsrath and finished by Seebass and Pigenot: *Hölderlins Sämtliche Werke* (Berlin, 1923). Italics are Hölderlin's.

Wesen ist das Kind . . . Es ist ganz, was es ist, und darum ist es so schön" (*Hyp.*, II, 93). However, it does not prevail: ". . . ein göttlich Wesen, so lang es nicht in die Chamäleonsfarbe der Menschen getaucht ist." "Da ich noch ein stilles Kind war und von dem allen, was uns umgiebt, nichts wußte . . ." (*Hyp.*, II, 93). With the development of consciousness the unity is destroyed:

Freundlichen Götter! . . .  
 Zwar damals rieff ich noch nicht  
 Euch mit Nahmen, auch  
 Nanntet mich nie, wie die Menschen sich nennen,  
 Als kennten sie sich.

(II, 47)

The "naming" of the world and the claim of knowing disturbs the original unity and starts the long "eccentric road" which Hölderlin names *Bildung*. *Bildung*, consciousness by initiation, is thus directly associated with *Trennung* (the first negative key term)—the initial act of consciousness destroys the given fellowship of being. At this point in Hölderlin's work this is merely stated as an awareness existing within himself, as an expression of his own reality; the general philosophical and poetic motivation will come later. But he already knows that the separation is a free, self-willed human act of which we, as humans, carry the burden and the responsibility:

Aber sage nur niemand, daß uns das Schiksaal trenne! Wir sind's, wir! wir haben unsere Lüst daran, uns in die Nacht des Unbekannten, in die kalte Fremde irgend einer Welt zu stürzen, und wär' es möglich, wir verließen der Sonne Gebiet und stürmten über des Irrsterns Gränzen hinaus [*Hyp.*, II, 101-102].

The language of Hölderlin's central subject is still vague and almost conventional, but the theme is there; controlled consciousness (*Bildung*) is the beginning of dissonance (*Trennung*) between man and nature.

The unfolding of consciousness, the "organization which we are able to give ourselves," consists of the series of means by which the original unity tries to restore itself. "Alles Getrennte findet sich wieder," says Hyperion at the end of the novel (II, 291), and the desire for unity is the prime mover of man's life, the supreme moral goal. The different stages of the initiation lead closer and closer to the final value of unity:

Eines zu seyn mit allem, was lebt, in seeliger Selbstvergessenheit wiederzukehren in's All der Natur, das ist der Gipfel der Gedanken und Freuden, das ist die heilige Bergeshöhe, der Ort der ewigen Ruhe, wo der Mittag seine Schwüle und der Donner seine Stimme verliert und das kochende Meer der Wooge des Kornfelds gleicht [*Hyp.*, II, 91].

Such is the final destination of the "eccentric road" which, through consciousness, leads from simplicity to recovered unity. Part of this idea is familiar enough from many similar statements in the Sturm und Drang writers, in Rousseau, or in Wordsworth's "The Child is

father of the Man . . ." But, in Hölderlin, childhood is not just a state to be remembered nostalgically in the elegiac mood of the pastoral; the necessity to get beyond this mood is inscribed in reality. By means of a deliberate and totally responsible series of acts, man takes himself toward the recovery of this unity. *Bildung* is entirely aimed toward the future and takes on the urgency of a moral imperative.

Hölderlin's own thought continues to emerge in the statement that concludes the passage: "The eccentric road which takes man, individually and collectively, from one point (more or less pure simplicity) to the other (more or less complete consciousness) seems, in its essential directions, to be always the same." The idea is taking shape that this movement is not erratic or a result of individual caprice, but that its development is itself a law which the mind can seize. The *Bildungsroman* thus takes on a new significance; not only is the initiation determined by its two extreme points (from simplicity through separation to recovered unity), but the intermediate cycles are determined in kind and in order. The succession of events, instead of being mere accidents of destiny, is a first approximation to this law of gradual growth.

In *Hyperion*, the succession is clearly marked; if the sequence may seem blurred at first reading, this is due to the monotony of the amorphous texture; we are still far removed from Hölderlin's later economy. But the mere statement of events shows the hierarchy of the repeated cycles. All of them have the same inherent structure; a certain degree of unity is achieved, then destroyed, in a manner which is similar to the initial destruction of the unity of childhood. The underlying seasonal rhythm forms the natural background on which the human struggle for harmony takes place.

The first cycle is that of instruction, in which the figure of Adamas, presumably representing Schiller, accomplishes the first of a series of initiations. He introduces the hero to the existing body of human wisdom and reveals to him the greatness of the Hellenic world. The ease with which Hyperion outgrows this stage is characteristic of Hölderlin's assurance in freeing himself from influences, but the relationship between master and disciple remains an essential and growing theme to the very last poems.

The second cycle is that of friendship, exemplified in the relationship with Alabanda. The immensely exalted tone and the fact that Alabanda returns in later episodes are indications of the gravity which this experience assumes in Hyperion's quest. Friendship is one of Hölderlin's holy words; it is the specific mood of innocent man to be a "friend" of nature, not in the sophisticated manner of Theocritus' shepherds, but in a powerfully spontaneous way. In the friendship between men, this feeling prevails perhaps in its purest form. Friendship is unity and, beyond

that, it is conversation (*Gespräch*) within the sphere of unity, the worldly equivalence of the conversation between the gods and the child that was at the beginning of things. More than the ambiguous Alabanda, the invisible Bellarmin is perhaps the true incarnation of the friendship theme in *Hyperion*,<sup>9</sup> and the letter form is partly justified on that basis. In one of the later poems, the theme is still remembered:

Wo aber sind die Freunde? Bellarmin  
Mit dem Gefährten? . . .  
(“Andenken,” IV, 62)

The next cycle of initiation is of course love, as it appears in the Diotima episode. Taken in itself, this is probably the most traditionally “romantic” passage in Hölderlin—the lifting of earthly love to the level of experienced unity of being: “Zart, wie der Aether, umwand mich Diotima. Thörichter, was ist die Trennung? flüsterte sie geheimnisvoll mir zu, mit dem Lächeln einer Unsterblichen” (*Hyp.*, II, 215). More characteristic of Hölderlin is the place which this experience occupies within the general plan of *Bildung*. It is definitely only a step within a development, a necessary stage to be transcended. Diotima’s solitary death is altogether different from the Tristan love-death, and her divinization is merely the divinization of the idea of unity and not the religious-erotic complex of Novalis’ *Geistliche Lieder*. Her death marks the end of the directly lyrical love theme in Hölderlin’s work. In the first version of *Empedokles*, Delia is merely a disciple, and in the subsequent fragments she disappears altogether. In “Andenken” women exist as highly stylized and remote figures, and only such women are present at the moment of divine revelation:

An Feiertagen gehn  
Die braunen Frauen daselbst  
Auf seidnen Boden,  
Zur Märzzeit . . .  
(IV, 61)

After the cycle of love follows the cycle of action, Hyperion’s disappointing participation in the struggle of his oppressed countrymen. Of all the major experiences, this one is perhaps at its most fragmentary in *Hyperion*, particularly if compared to its later development. Its importance is clear from its position as the central episode of the novel, but the motivation of events remains arbitrary and disconnected.

Following a series of episodes which are mostly necessities of plot or side themes—Alabanda’s departure, Diotima’s death, the beautiful

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<sup>9</sup> One of the complexities and probably of the weaknesses of the Alabanda episode is that the friendship is strangely interwoven with its antithesis. Aside from being the friend, Alabanda is a sort of antiself, the symbol of another “eccentric road” which Hyperion has rejected. We have a foreshadowing here of the relationship between Empedokles and his brother opponent (“der Gegner”) which was to be part of *Empedokles auf dem Aetna*.

"Schiksaalslied," the violent diatribe against Germany—come the concluding pages, which need interpretation. The last step in Hyperion's initiation, which permits the hopeful though suspended ending ("alles Getrennte findet sich wieder") is mysterious; all possible experiences seem to have failed or been transcended. The explanation may be found in the vision of Diotima's return and in the change of tone in the last passage. The apparition of Diotima is the only episode in the novel that has a supernatural dimension. And the tone of the final page changes from the elegiac memories of a defeated hero to a hymnal tone of lyrical praise. Does it not represent the inward movement of a soul which, up till then, has conducted its search for unity in a world that lies outside of itself? In the world of friendship, love, and action, the soul forgets itself in the hope of discovering a new unity. When it has failed, it turns inward and starts the same road over again, but this time with the additional dimension of inwardness. This is Hyperion's discovery, after he has run the complete course of his outward cycle. He has joined Diotima "bei den Deinen," in the life of the spirit. "Wir leben den Äther doch all' und innigst im Innersten gleichen wir uns" (*Hyp.*, II, 291). The revelation occurs in the spring; it marks a new beginning, a new cycle is going to develop; "Nächstens mehr" are the last words of the novel. The road from simplicity to harmony in consciousness leads through our inner self. The theoretical essay which connects most directly with *Hyperion* starts with the study of "der reine Geist, die reine Innigkeit" ("Grund zum Empedokles," III, 316).

Keats's *Endymion* can be, and has been, read in a great variety of ways. A recent article by Mr. Wigod<sup>10</sup> gives a comprehensive survey of the different schools of thought; they cover a wide range of conflicting opinions. But the main issue always seems to come down to the same point—how to relate the serious and coherent statement in Book I, the passage starting with "Wherein lies happiness?" (I, 777 ff.), with the desultory and apparently disconnected passages that follow. Is there any unity of theme or does the poem go entirely astray?

In his most ambitious works, with which *Endymion* belongs, there are good reasons to give Keats at least the benefit of doubt as far as both seriousness and unity are concerned—the most important reason being the undeniable organic growth of a work that, not unlike Hölderlin's, keeps restating its essential problems with increasing depth and lucidity. The assumption of an underlying poetic—or even metaphysical—unity of purpose is perfectly compatible with as apparently nonphilosophical a mind as Keats's. True philosophers deal with the issues common to all men. The difference between their expression

<sup>10</sup> Jacob K. Wigod, "The Meaning of *Endymion*," *PMLA*, LXVIII (1953), 779-790.



and that of poets (or artists, in general) is one of terminological exactness, and not of matter or intent. It is therefore possible that a deep analogy exists between a philosophically aware poet like Hölderlin and an intuitive poet like Keats, and that it is legitimate to apply, as it were, the philosophical conclusions of the first to the poetic utterances of the second. If there is indeed a definitely determined road along which human unity attempts to restore itself, the discovery of such a road in Keats's poem would substantiate the seriousness of the main theme and reveal at least some unity in the general conception.

On the basis of the "Wherein lies happiness?" passage and Book I as a whole, *Endymion* can well be described, in Hölderlin's terms, as a quest to bring "our needs into a state of harmony with themselves, with the forces within us, and with everything we enter into contact with." We know of such a state by the revelation of an initial "situation of utter simplicity" in which this harmony was achieved "by means of the mere organization of nature." The pastoral opening seems to be the literary representation of this pervasive mood of natural unity which, quite fittingly, finds its symbol in the great God Pan, the god of ripening and of the dark rhythms of nature. He stands at the beginning of the mystery of original oneness. He is the "Dread opener of the mysterious doors / Leading to universal knowledge" (I, 288-289). He is asked to "be still the leaven / That spreading in this dull and clodded earth / Gives it a touch ethereal—" (I, 296-298). Awareness of natural unity is the beginning of our earthly undertaking. The theme is a persistent one in Keats; in its most implicit form, it becomes the freshness of his sensation which always maintains a kind of childlike openness.

In this situation of ideal simplicity, the torn hero appears, suffering because of his mortal condition which has destroyed his initial perfection. No longer a child, he has lost his happy innocence; Hölderlin's division has reached him. At the same time, he has attained the conviction that he must set out to restore this unity, which is no longer given him but must now be achieved "by the organization which [he] is able to give [himself]." His task becomes a quest for unity. He must feel again "A fellowship with essence" (I, 779) and step "into a sort of oneness" (I, 796). This aim is strikingly similar to Hyperion's ideal, "Eines zu sein mit Allem, was lebt, in seeliger Selbstvergessenheit wiederzukehren . . ." (*Hyph.*, II, 91). It is the main theme of both works.

*Endymion*, then, is a poem about unity, not about love, as Mr. Newell Ford would have it, not just about "ideal beauty that is ideal love," as Mr. Wigod argues. Neither is it about the ideal in general, in the Neoplatonic sense, but specifically about the ideal of unity—which, if need is felt for a philosophical antecedent, is a pre-Socratic concept

rather than a Platonic one. The line on fellowship with essence, in which the language, to some extent, is metaphysical, should be emphasized more than the introduction of Cynthia as "a love immortal" (I, 849); the latter line can be read as a metaphorical restatement of the former. The main reason for the confusion of the poem lies in the fact that the concept of unity is consistently expressed in a symbolic language borrowed from the experience of erotic love. Love is not a metaphysical category here, like the Platonic Eros, but a metaphor. This image is natural enough, particularly in a poet whose very concrete imagination always tends to see abstractions in terms of physical sensations—to which can be added the sensual obsession which, during the period when *Endymion* was written, seems to have made it difficult for Keats to talk about any experience in nonerotic terms. Further confusion arises from the presence, within the poem, of an actual love experience, in a literal, nonsymbolic sense. In the passages that deal with it, the language is descriptive instead of metaphorical. The actual love episode is given undue emphasis, for the very same and obvious reason which prompted the symbolization of unity as a sexual embrace. The introductory enumeration of themes generously gives "an orb'd drop / Of light, and that is love . . ." (I, 806-807) thirty-five lines of development while none of the other themes receive more than five. This lopsided balance receives still further disequilibrium through the climaxes which, at the end of each experience, are supposed to convey the blending of achieved unity and which, in accordance with the prevalent imagery, are mostly stated in terms of "naked waists" and "fondling and kissing." No wonder it becomes difficult to keep apart the passages in which love is an actual experience, among others, from those in which it is a symbol for something else. But only at the expense of this effort can *Endymion* be given a thematic coherence which Keats's *Hyperion* amply substantiates.

Like Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, *Endymion* should be seen as a *Bildungsroman* in which we follow the different repetitive stages of the hero's initiation to the point where he becomes ready to recover the unity of being, lost at the start. Like Hölderlin, Keats feels this initiation as a series of experiences ordered in a general and deliberate pattern of growth. Even two such divergent critics as Mr. Newell Ford and Mr. Wasserman have emphasized the repetitive pattern in Keats's work, which they refer to respectively as "prefigurative imagination" and "the finer tone." The movement is constant in Keats, and he is himself aware of it. When it is first stated, in "Sleep and Poetry," it may seem borrowed from Wordsworth. But Keats keeps coming back to it, in moments of greatest seriousness, in the most important letters—to Reynolds on May 3, 1818, to George and Georgiana Keats on February 14, 1819, etc.—and in both versions of *Hyperion*. There can be no

doubt that this is Keats's deepest and most personal conviction; he sees life as a task of ever-growing consciousness, which has to encompass a wider and wider range of knowledge and experience, harmonized by the repeated awareness that moments of unity between the self and the world are the supreme ideal, around which the entire act of living has to be organized. This feeling is much closer to the forward-looking and deliberate *Bildung* of Hölderlin than to the elegiac recollections of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" or the "Intimations of Immortality."

The succession of the different stages is very close to that in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*. Book I announces the progression which is more or less adequately represented in the succeeding events. Starting from the spontaneous enjoyment of nature, we come to the "old songs waken from enclouded tombs" (I, 787 ff.). This passage refers to the discovery and study of the world of art and learning; it is of some importance that it does not refer to practice of art as a creative poet. Neither in Hölderlin nor in Keats is there a suggestion, at this point in their work, that their heroes will reach their aim by the practice of poetry. They are solicited by a wide variety of experiences, and their final choice is still much more general than the poetic act in itself. Endymion's delight in art is Keats discovering Shakespeare, Homer, and the Elgin marbles. These are the formative years of study, the discovery of the masters and of the past: "old songs," "old ditties," "ghosts of melodious prophecying." The theme corresponds to the Adamas passage of Hyperion's education, and it receives its allegorical representation in Book II, in the voyage "through the hollow, / The silent mysteries of earth" (II, 213-214). We can suppose the "dusky empire . . . with all its lines abrupt and angular" (II, 228) to be the severe world of science (of which Keats had some experience). Out of this world, Endymion moves into the more congenial world of art, mythology, and poetry, to reach the climactic ecstasy of the final scene—all in all one of the worst in *Endymion*.

It does not require much argument to present Book III as the development of "enthralments far / More self-destroying" (I, 798-799); the Glaucus episode has generally been read to express sympathy with human suffering and friendship, which then leads to humanitarian action. Perhaps the character of Peona can be added as another example of Keats's theme of friendship. Book III would then correspond to Hölderlin's Alabanda episode and to Hyperion's battle for the liberation of Greece, though the order of the two last cycles (love, action) is inverted, since Keats obviously wants to save his love theme for the end. The love symbolism, more or less incongruous in Book II, becomes more confusing here; the liberation of suffering humanity is rather bizarrely represented by the freed lovers. Significantly, it is this theme,

which is at its most fragmentary in both poems, that will become eternal in the later work.

In *Endymion*, Diotima's equivalent has become an Indian maiden, a nice illustration of Keats's lack of actual experience. He is completely stifled here by the inevitable clash between earthly love and unity represented in terms of love; this leads to the awkward complications of plot at the end. The only advantage, to Keats's credit, of the scenes of jealousy between Cynthia and her earthly rival is that the final statement, which remains rather vague in Hölderlin, stands out somewhat better here. Even Mr. Ford refers to the final decision of Endymion as an "eremitic resolution." Endymion's preference of Cynthia over the maiden is clearly a movement from the material to the spiritual, from exteriority to inwardness. If the union with Cynthia represents recovered unity, then the final statement of both works is remarkably similar; unity has to be conquered first within our inner self.

The unity of *Endymion* is thus the unity of the "eccentric road which seems, in its essential directions, to be always the same." The fact that the road actually turns out to be the same in both works is in itself an argument for Hölderlin's assumption, a more convincing one than either work could contain within itself. And it is a strong argument in favor of the true seriousness of *Endymion*. But both poems are preliminary statements of essential themes rather than their full poetical expression.

Their defects, too, are strikingly similar: oversentimentality and overintensity of tone; incoherence of structural design, despite the underlying unity of theme; overworked texture, which hides the real profundity of the idea under a superficial gloss of decorative diffuseness—with, in both cases, sudden moments of clarity which prophesy what is to come. These defects are closely linked to the actual statement of both works which, in fact, is a negative one. Unity of being cannot be achieved in the series of concrete experiences which the outer world normally offers. The coherence of existence, which Hölderlin boldly postulates and of which Keats has an ardent and groping premonition, cannot be perceived without going through the experience of inwardness. Neither Hyperion nor Endymion is capable of this, since they are incarnations of the self, which both poets have only just sufficiently outgrown to be able to objectify it. Neither Hyperion nor Endymion could see what their authors are only beginning to ponder in necessary solitude. And neither of their messages is final. The problems of the concrete lie on the other side of inwardness and will reappear within this new perspective. This will be the subject of Hölderlin's *Empedokles*.

Unlike Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, which is diffuse but perhaps all too simple, the three fragments of *Empedokles* are very difficult texts. They

were written over a period of two years, between 1798 and 1800,<sup>11</sup> and their difficulty is due to Hölderlin's constant growth and development during this time.<sup>12</sup> They form the connecting link between the early period, well exemplified in *Hyperion*, and the greatness of the later hymns. Keats's *Hyperion* occupies a similar position in his work; it accomplishes the same deepening of his original themes, in a movement that can be followed in passing from *Endymion* to the first fragment, *Hyperion* (April 1819), and then to the second, *The Fall of Hyperion* (December 1819). For no good reason *Hyperion* seems to have been neglected in recent Keats criticism, which has apparently devoted most of its attention to the odes.<sup>13</sup> Like Hölderlin's *Empedokles*, Keats's *Hyperion* suffers from being a work of transition towards summits which Keats, however, was never to reach. An examination of this parallel may help to bring out the considerable importance of a fragment which remains almost necessarily inadequate to the inexhaustible richness of its theme.

Hölderlin's development from *Hyperion* to *Empedokles* can be seen in the change which occurs in the central theme when, after turning inward, it rises to a new power. The ideal of unity, postulated in *Hyperion* as the final goal of a series of unconnected though necessary

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<sup>11</sup> The original idea had first been stated in a preliminary sketch from 1797, the so-called *Frankfurter Plan*, which uses elements from Diogenes Bios (see Gisela Wagner, *Hölderlin und die Vorsokratiker*, Würzburg, 1937, pp. 97 ff.). Some of these elements remain in the first and longest version of *Der Tod des Empedokles* (*Emp. I*, III, 75-171); the second version, under the same title, is much more fragmentary (*Emp. II*, III, 172-195); and the third *Empedokles auf dem Aetna* (*Emp. III*, III, 199-227) differs entirely from the two preceding ones. There has been some question as to the order in which the three fragments were written. The Hölderlinian equivalence of Mr. Finney's thesis on Keats—putting *The Fall of Hyperion* before *Hyperion*—is represented by the dissertation of W. Böhm, *Studien zu Hölderlins Empedokles* (Weimar, 1902). Böhm considered *Empedokles auf dem Aetna* as the first text. In his later work, however, he took a different view; see W. Böhm, *Hölderlin* (Halle-Saale, 1928).

<sup>12</sup> This growth is reflected in the *Philosophische Fragmenten* which date from the same period. Exegesis of *Empedokles* is difficult without reference to these all-important texts, particularly the two essays, "Das Werden im Vergehen" (III, 309-315) and "Grund zum Empedokles" (III, 316-335). Some critics, however, prefer to deal with *Empedokles* without using this theoretical framework; see, for instance, Romano Guardini, *Hölderlin. Weltbild und Frömmigkeit* (Leipzig, 1939) or E. Tonnellat, *L'Œuvre poétique et la pensée de Hölderlin* (Paris, 1950).

<sup>13</sup> Among recent commentaries on the odes see F. R. Leavis in *Revaluation* (London, 1936); J. Middleton Murry in *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Portraits* (London, 1949); Allen Tate, "A Reading of Keats," *American Scholar*, XV (1946), 55-63, 189-197; Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (New York, 1945), pp. 447 ff.; R. H. Fogle, "Keats's Ode to a Nightingale," *PMLA*, LXVIII (1953), 211-222; Earl R. Wasserman in *The Finer Tone* (Baltimore, 1953). In contrast, the only recent article on *Hyperion* is by Kenneth Muir, "The Meaning of *Hyperion*," *Essays in Criticism*, II (1952), 54-75.

steps, becomes now a causally coherent and defined inner process.<sup>14</sup> Instead of being a static condition that can be reached as one reaches a certain point in space, unity is seen as a dialectical motion between two antithetical poles.<sup>15</sup> Unity (*Versöhnung*) is no longer a solution, but only an infinitesimal moment in a process. Hölderlin calls this process "Übermaß der Innigkeit," the movement by which a man rises to a new level of synthesis by going to the extreme of the opposites among which he lives.

Empedokles is the man who has lived through this process. He has transcended the dialectic of *Trennung* on the level of inward life, and has emerged with a new synthesis; in him the self stands out as never before, and through his word nature shines with an unseen splendor. Seen historically, he is the first man of the New Age, and, as such, he is bound to stand in complete opposition to his contemporaries. But, since his essential intent is precisely the reconciliation (however temporary) of opposites, he will feel his task to be the leading and instructing of his people, just as he has been led and instructed by his insight into the transcendental principle (here called nature) that stood beyond and outside of him. His situation, then, is that of a man whose inner greatness has grown in solitary but restless meditation, pledged to re-establish contact between the self and what seems to oppose and to ignore this self. The immediate consequence of this achieved greatness, however, is to involve him completely in the historical destiny of his nation. The totally inward man has to open up to the movement of history and, since he must be defining himself in opposition to the order that surrounds him, this involvement will take on the appearance of a

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<sup>14</sup> This process is explained in the *Philosophical Fragments* that accompany *Empedokles* rather than in the drama itself. The lack of this needed theoretical background accounts to a large extent for the obscurity of the text, which also labors under the impossibility of expressing in a dramatic medium the lyrical development that precedes the concrete situation at the beginning of the action—Empedokles' inner crisis before his fellow citizens decide to reject him.

<sup>15</sup> The metaphysical definition of these poles is an important part of Hölderlin's thought, more essential to him than the dialectic itself, which, unlike his friend and school companion Hegel, he sees as an ontological *donnée* rather than as an intellectual act. At this stage in his development, the two poles are generally called *Natur* and *Kunst*. *Natur* is whatever is universal, infinite, undifferentiated, supratemporal—a concept which goes far beyond the idea of nature in a pastoral sense. Hölderlin summarizes these properties in the term *aorgisch*, as distinct from *anorganisch*, which would simply mean: not alive. Hölderlin's nature is intensely alive, but it is a life which has not particularized itself in an individual consciousness. (On this point, see Gisela Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 168.) *Kunst*, on the other hand, coincides with the human self, that being which, by an act of consciousness, recognizes itself as individual, particular, finite, distinct from the totality of being—summarized in this misleading term *organisch*. In the later work of Hölderlin, this polarity changes and the two poles are simply referred to as man and the gods, while nature becomes an all-encompassing, suprapolar entity. See, e.g., M. Heidegger's comment on the hymn, "Wie wenn am Feiertage," in *Erläuterungen*, pp. 72 ff.

struggle. The energy that carried him through the effort of reaching a new synthesis was fed by the knowledge that the existing order—the existing condition of opposition between self and nature—was no longer tolerable. It is clear, from *Hyperion*, that the reality offered to him could not have satisfied his need for conscious harmony. He has to seek and to fight his opposite, in the form of the static, stratified, and artificial order of the age. Seen from the point of view of his contemporaries, he appears both immensely attractive, since he holds all the promise of the new, and extremely dangerous, since he requires the destruction of all existing institutions. He will be loved by some (Delia, Pausanias) as no one ever was, but hated by others (Hermokrates) who thrive on institutional stability, while the masses of the people keep wavering between love and fear.

This is the situation at the beginning of *Empedokles*; and it is the same scene as that on which Apollo enters at the beginning of Book III of Keats's *Hyperion*, after an exposition which Keats has made more explicit than that of Hölderlin's drama. All we know about Empedokles' fellow citizens stems from the conversations between Hermokrates and Kritias (*Emp. I*) and Hermokrates and Mekades (*Emp. II*); the main focus is always on Empedokles. On the other hand, the first version of Keats's *Hyperion* devotes two entire books to the fallen Titans, the equivalent of Hölderlin's "hyperpolitischen, immer rechtenden und berechnenden Agrigentern" ("Grund," III, 329). Their relationship to Apollo is similar to the relationship between Empedokles and the leaders of Sicily. They are characterized by their strictly hierarchical, hyperconservative stratifications; they sound as would Shakespeare's Greeks, in *Troilus and Cressida*, after centuries of passive obedience to Ulysses' law of degree. Even at the brink of disaster, the undefeated Hyperion cannot freely break the rules of hierarchy ("Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne / And bid the day begin, if but for change," I, 290-291); and the speech of Oceanus, which is the opposite of Ulysses' speech in another famous council scene, is bound to be heresy to the Titans' ears. In total opposition to them, Apollo appears as the new man, the force of youth and future growing beyond the existing order.<sup>16</sup> Like Empedokles the self-achieved harmony of pastoral unity leaves him dissatisfied:

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<sup>16</sup> A similar argument, with a different terminology, is made by Mr. Muir (*op. cit.*, pp. 59 ff.) in his contention that *Hyperion* describes the victory of "men of achievement" over "men of power." Men of achievement are characterized by "negative capability" which, seen historically, is the ability to conceive of the new. And the ethical problem raised by the apparent detachment of the poet gifted with negative capability is solved in *The Fall of Hyperion*, where this very ability takes on a tragic dimension which gives it great moral dignity. See particularly *Fall*, I, 161-176.

O Why should I  
 Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air  
 Yields to my step aspirant? why should I  
 Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?  
 (*Hyp.*, III, 91-94)

and he grows out of his dissatisfaction by opening up to history, by becoming intellectually conscious of the dialectic of being which occurs in the world, as he knew it to occur within himself:

Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.  
 Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,  
 Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,  
 Creations and destroyings, all at once  
 Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,  
 And deify me . . .  
 (*Hyp.*, III, 113-118)

The distinctive originality of this passage and, at the same time, the deeper analogy between *Hyperion* and *Empedokles* appear in this résumé of Keats's historical awareness. History is no longer the static example of certain high achievements, as antiquity was to the neoclassic age, but a movement which includes destruction and chaos ("creations and destroyings, all at once . . .") as well as achievements. True historical awareness seems to be consciousness of the congruence between the curve of inner growth of an individual man and the outer real growth of the life of nations. And as nations rise and fall, live and die, so man's thought and development become a succession of agonies and rebirths, instead of the gradual and determined growth of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* or of Keats's *Endymion*. The growth of Apollo is stated in an imagery which suggests a constant interplay between life and death, culminating in the final paradox: "Die into life":

Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush  
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs;  
 Most like the struggle at the gate of death;  
 Or liker still to one who should take leave  
 Of pale immortal death, and with a pang  
 As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse  
 Die into life . . .  
 (*Hyp.*, III, 124-130)

Similarly, the climax of *Empedokles*, his descent into the crater of Mt. Aetna, is to be an act of life-giving death. Seen from a point of view that transcends the individual, the point of view of the sage—Oceanus in Keats, Empedokles himself and Manes (*Emp.* III) in Hölderlin—the vision of history becomes the alternating movement of rise and fall of the often-quoted passage:



And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,  
 So art thou not the last; it cannot be:  
 Thou art not the beginning nor the end . . .<sup>17</sup>  
 (*Hyp.*, II, 188 ff.)

These lines have their equivalent in Hölderlin:

Es scheun  
 Die Erdenkinder meist das Neu und Fremde;  
 Daheim in sich zu bleiben, strebet nur  
 Der Pflanze Leben und das frohe Tier.  
 . . . Menschen ist die große Lust  
 Gegeben, daß sie selber sich verzüngen.  
 Und aus dem reinigenden Tode, den  
 Sie selber sich zu rechter Zeit gewählt  
 Erstehn, wie aus dem Styx Achill,  
 Unüberwindlich—die Völker.  
 So wags! was ihr geerbt, was ihr erworben,  
 Was euch der Vater Mund erzählt, gelehrt,  
 Gesez und Brauch, der alten Götter Nahmen,  
 Vergeßt es kühn, und hebt, wie Neugeborne,  
 Die Augen auf zur göttlichen Natur.<sup>18</sup>  
 (*Emp. I*, III, 146-7)

The new hero who has awakened to this historical awareness—Apollo after his initiation by Mnemosyne—starts his task of leadership and instruction with a knowledge which his predecessors did not possess—the knowledge that his achievements are ephemeral. By accepting and requiring the destruction of what exists, he also accepts the transitory nature of his own undertaking and realizes that his birth contains within itself his own death. Since he takes within himself the total destiny of his people, he also assumes their failure and downfall as an inherent part of his personal destiny:

Denn wo ein Land ersterben soll, da wählt  
 Der Geist noch Einen sich am End, durch den  
 Sein Schwanensang, das letzte Leben tönent.  
 (*Emp. III*, III, 223)

Thus, what first appears as an act of intellectual growth and insight gradually takes on an ethical dimension of supreme sacrifice, of suicide in the highest possible sense. Both poets become increasingly aware of this as their meditation progresses, and their works shift from the theme

<sup>17</sup> Oceanus' speech has traditionally been interpreted as a speech on progress. But it is a very unusual idea of progress, since it states the necessity of decadence as well as that of improvement and emphasizes the discontinuity of all historical development. The new generation's main attribute is not so much any intrinsic superiority over the older, but primarily the greater strength of its youth, a transitory value as the following lines explicitly state: "Yea, by that law, another race may drive / Our conquerors to mourn as we do now" (*Hyp.*, II, 230-231).

<sup>18</sup> For a complete statement of Hölderlin's theory of history, see the essay, "Das Werden im Vergehen" (III, 309 ff.), of which the thought is actually ahead of the Empedokles tragedy and finds its poetic fulfillment in the later hymns.

of historical rejuvenation to the theme of sacrifice. The scene of the third *Empedokles* fragment is the slopes of Mt. Aetna, and the fragment deals exclusively with Empedokles' state of mind and vision immediately before his voluntary death; while the birth and death imagery of Keats's *Hyperion* is replaced, in *The Fall of Hyperion*, by the imagery of suffering and sacrifice which finds its supreme symbol in the Christ-like face of Moneta. The theme of love, which was so prominent in the early work, thus reappears in an altogether new light, as the sacrificial act of historical commitment by which a superior individual becomes the example which serves to regenerate his people. "Das Schicksaal seiner Zeit erforderte auch nicht eigentliche That; . . . es erforderte ein *Opfer*, wo der ganze Mensch das wirklich und sichtbar wird, worinn das Schicksaal seiner Zeit sich aufzulösen scheint, wo die Extreme sich in Einem wirklich und sichtbar zu vereinigen scheinen" ("Grund," III, 327). Before he realized this, Empedokles could rightly say that he had "Die Menschen menschlich nie geliebt, gedient" (*Emp. III*, III, 204); but, once he has seen his true role, he can die in tranquil serenity.<sup>19</sup>

The figures of Empedokles and Apollo thus grow from poet ("Er scheint nach allem zum Dichter geboren," "Grund," III, 326) to leader. But, by his act of supreme sacrifice, Empedokles takes on the dimension of the Savior. Both poets could identify themselves with their hero in the first two stages, but not in the last; there is no trace of *hubris* in Hölderlin or in Keats. Keats's allegory is clearer here than Hölderlin's. The identification Keats-Apollo is obvious enough, and Apollo, like Empedokles, grows to understand the necessity of love for "soul-making." He becomes one of ". . . those to whom the miseries of the world / Are misery, and will not let them rest" (*Fall*, I, 148-149). But the actual act of sacrifice is not within his power; and the poet is merely the one who has *seen* the sacrifice, with the mind's eye, as Moneta reveals it to him:

The sacrifice is done, but not the less  
Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.  
My power, which to me is still a curse,  
Shall be to thee a wonder; for the scenes  
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain,  
With an electrical changing misery,  
Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold  
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not.

(*Fall*, I, 241-248)

In *Empedokles*, the disciple Pausanias, who stays with Empedokles to the very last, fulfills the same function; but Pausanias is not identified with the poet as clearly as is Keats's Apollo. A later hymn of

<sup>19</sup> The analogy, in spite of important differences, of this theme with Hegel's *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal* has been pointed out by several commentators.

Hölderlin, "Wie wenn am Freiertage . . .," defines the role of the poet as necessarily distinct from that of the Savior. Before His arrival, the poet is the one who kept the minds of the people open for the perception of the sacrifice; during the crisis he is the one who has stood by Christ and understood His suffering ("eines Gottes Leiden mitleidend"), and, when all has been accomplished, he transmits the power of the supreme example:

Doch uns gebührt es, unter Gottes Gewittern,  
Ihr Dichter! mit entblößtem Haupte zu stehen,  
Des Vaters Strahl, ihn selbst, mit eigener Hand  
Zu fassen und dem Volk ins Lied  
Gehüllt die himmlische Gaabe zu reichen.

(IV, 153)

The thematic analogy between *Empedokles* and *Hyperion* is more profound than a quick survey of two very complex fragments can suggest. The kinship between the poets is partly ontological; both being total and very pure poets, they share elements that pertain to the being of the poetic as such. It is partly temperamental, in that both poets are, to some extent, metaphysically inclined—Keats certainly not in a technical sense but, undeniably, in his constant concern with ultimate problems, as appears in *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, and the letters.<sup>20</sup> But the kinship is also, to no small degree, historical—that is, typical of how a poetic consciousness was bound to react to the intellectual and political atmosphere of the early nineteenth century.

The Keats-Hölderlin parallel acquires a clearer relief if it is seen within the general perspective of contemporary European poetry. This cluster of problems, this specific relationship between the poetic, the historical, and the divine, has not ceased to haunt our modern consciousness. In more recent poets, the attitude toward this set of problems may have changed, but the continuity of their presence still forms the substratum of the present-day poetic mind. To explore the significance of Keats and Hölderlin as standing at the beginning of this development goes far beyond the framework of an introductory essay, but it would be a fruitful way to formulate the spiritual crisis which forms the background of twentieth-century literature.

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<sup>20</sup> "[Keats's] unceasing endeavor to solve the problem of sense and knowledge, art and humanity, is in itself an index of his stature." Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), p. 182.