Over the years, John Keats's unique imagination has been profusely studied and analysed and critics have recognized mythology as one of the major influences on his thought and imagery. The present study attempts to elaborate this aspect further.

It consists of an assessment of his poems, both mythic and non-mythic, in the context of the poet's own mythic vision. It throws light on the sub-stratum of mythical themes that lend coherence and unity to the entire range of his poetry. It elaborates the conviction that mythologizing comes naturally and easily to Keats. Like a pagan from the mythical Golden Age, he freely re-enacts, weaves and at times even creates new myths and thus exploits fully the archetypal power inherent in his material.

Keats's use of mythology is personal and without any extra-literary design. Keats believed that the artist does not proceed to the root of all feeling and impulses by the simplest path. His artistic intuition leads him to the elemental forms of nature and human life incorporated in mythology. Keats's doctrine of Negative capability supplies the base for his mythic vision. Myths
record the primary unconscious process of shaping human responses to the varied conditions of life. Instinct serves as the chief generative agent in Keats's mythologizing processes.

Mythology provides him with substance not only for his poetry but also for his philosophy. It leads him to a deepened understanding of man and the universe. He is attracted to mythology and mythologizing as the very means of comprehending and communicating his artistic experience. The two systems of mythology that have influenced him in particular are the Greek and Roman systems. Traces of Biblical and Hindu mythology can also be found in his poetry. However, he does not rigidly follow any given system of mythology. He retells myths as though they are his own creations. This gives him the license to freely mingle the different systems, to add or delete events and incidents wherever it suits him. At times, he even breaks the barriers of time and for the purpose of expressing an idea clearly, he brings together different mythological stages and presents them as co-existent. He frequently interknits smaller myths into the framework of the major one.

It is possible that Keats was not always conscious
of the full potential and relevance of every mythic image, allusion, and archetype that he used in his poetry. However, as mythic images and archetypes have their own unconscious organisations and design, they were easily and effectively absorbed into his poetry.

Keats's long poem *Endymion* highlights the profound sensitiveness of Keats to ancient mythology. The quest of Endymion can be defined as a venture of the poet's mind into its own hidden depths. It can also be treated as the quest of the poet for his medium as well as aesthetic goals. Keats's second epic *Hyperion* is a mythological elaboration of his own poetic desires. Keats's ballads and romances are a reworking of the tales of ritual origin. The dominant mythological motifs of his epics can be located in these poems also. The heroines of *The Eve of St. Agnes* and 'Isabella' are chaste and virtuous women and represent the beneficent aspect of the Great Goddess who is one of the mythological divinities whom Keats especially reveres. In a shift, she becomes the death-goddess. The heroines of *Lamia* and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' represent this evil aspect of the Great Goddess. All female family associations can be traced to her. So deep was Keats's preoccupation with these
romantic archetypes that he transported them into his own situation. In the poems addressed to or inspired by his beloved Fanny Brawne, the same motivations are seen at work. Fanny is cast as a character in his larger mythical plot.

In the major odes, the Great Goddess appears variously. She symbolizes the generative spirit behind all creation. Keats instinctively perceives the communicative relevance of certain ancient divinities of his artistic purpose and through their fictionalized experiences he seeks deliverence from the oppressive forces that limit his own creative potential. Keats seems to adopt Apollo as a personal symbolic deity. Apollo occurs in his poetry as the embodiment of artistic integrity and the highest form of beauty. The father-figure too, has a specific status. In all situations, he extends support to the quest of the younger man.

The archetypal green bower has regenerative connotations. It is linked to the death and rebirth of vegetation. In Keats's mythic vision it comes to represent the constantly changing state of man. Trees, in his mythic vision, are the immortal historians with oracular properties. Water represents the life spirit. Air represents
the spiritual ascent that recharges the intuition. The four elements, earth, water, air and fire are used to connect the mortal and immortal worlds.

Poetry for Keats is not the mere literary rendering of ideas but a comprehensive cognitive crystallization of relationships of life itself to all its primary forms viz. the elements (earth, air, water, fire) to love, to death to all the agonies of the human heart. Mythology serves as the sensual and fertile metaphor for his poetic vision.

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