Preface

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. Critical concepts have linked all mythological allusions to the verbal and visual sources available to the poet. The significance of the poet's mythological imagery has been generally analysed in the light of the classical texts available to him.

While acknowledging the value of such works, 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.

Mythologizing is an essential component of his
psychic and creative processes. As it is difficult to separate the psychological and biographical elements, there are junctures at which the poet and his hero merge into each other. The poet's own experiences are woven into the fabric of his larger mythical plot. Infact, the mythical mode serves as the deepest and most fertilizing source of poetic energy.

Keats's letters have been used as the testimonials to these observations. Relevant passages have frequently been cited. They highlight the fact that Keats's use of mythology does not suggest a deliberate contrivance for the sake of mere poetic effect but represents his artistic response to the world around him.

I have made use, where appropriate, of Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. A number of myths have been cited in this study. They are based on versions offered by Thomas Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable*, Charles Mills Gayley's *The Classical Myths in Literature And in Art*, Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*, H.J. Rose's *A Handbook of Literature*, Sir Paul Harvey's *The Oxford Companion to
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