CHAPTER III

The Cosmic Marriage

Endymion Bks. III & IV
Bks. III and IV represent the next two phases of the quest. The two water-spirits Alpheus and Arethusa lead Endymion from under the earth into the sea--

Her turned -- there was a whelming sound. He stepped--
There was a cooler light;...
He saw the giant sea above his head.

(II. 11. 1018-23)

This is the beginning of the second part of the mythic quest. In traditional mythology water represents the life spirit, it is the symbol for creativity and the medium of purification. All vegetation is nourished by water and man is reborn of water and the spirit. As the descent to the underworld was needed for the seed to germinate, the journey through water is needed for the new sapling to flower and fruit. Throughout Endymion's subterranean journey there are rivers and cataracts. Significantly, in Bk. I all the three messages from the underworld were associated with water. The first was received in a dream in 'mellow utterance' comparable to the sound of a 'cavern spring'; the second from a well and the third from a fountain.
Book III opens with a condemnation of false gods. The poet comments on the small stature of these self-appointed deities who have not 'ons tinge of sanctuary splendour'. Their 'baaing venities' 'self-applause' and the 'intoxicating tones' of their worshippers force him to ask 'Are than regalities all gilded masks?' The answer follows --

No, there are throned seats  
unscaleable  
But by a patient wing, a  
constant spell,  
Or by ethereal things  
that, unconfined,  
Can make a ladder of the  
eternal wind,  
And poise about in cloudy  
thunder-tents  
To watch the abysm-birth  
of elements.  
Aye, 'bove the withering  
of old-lipped Fate  
A thousand Powers keep  
religious state,  
In water, fiery realm,  
and airy bourne,  
And, silent as a consecrated  
urn,  
Hold sphery sessions for  
a season due.  

( III. 11. 23-33 )

The 'throned seats' belong to the true deities. The sanctity of their offices is strictly maintained. Their procedures are as 'silent as a consecrated urn' in
contrast to the 'shouting and belaboured drums' of the false gods. Superior assets like patience and sincerity 'can make a ladder' for the mystical, aerial ascent to the heavenly region above the primal divisions of the cosmos viz. earth, water, air and fire. Endymion's quest through the same primal realms is also a test of his patience and sincerity. In Bk.II Keats had traced the origin of mythology to the elements. Now he, reiterates his faith in the superiority of the mythic vision. The consecrated urn concretizes, for the poet, the spirit of his mythic vision. The urn is a recurrent image as the relevance of mythology to poetry is a recurrent question. For Keats, mythology embodies the rudiments of poetic magic. It contains in its depths the secret principles of poetic decorum which only the true poet with his instinctive reverence can identify. And when the 'high Poet' comes in contact with the gods --

...benevolence
Shakes hands with our own
Ceres, every sense
Filling with spiritual
sweets to plenitude,
As bees gorge full their cells. 1

( III. 11. 37-40 )

The consistent presence of the great mother is emphasized. Once again she spreads her generative benevolence of the poet's imagination filling it with 'spiritual sweets'.
Thus energized, the poet now turns his attention to the moon 'the gentler-mightiest' of all the divinities in heaven and then to love which has taught 'Strange journeyings' to lovers through the ages. The Great Goddess retains her identity throughout the poem either as the Moon or as Love.

The original, pre-Aryan, Greek moon-goddess has three aspects identified with the three faces of the moon. In another analogue she was linked with the three elements. The maiden of the upper air is Selene, the nymph of the Earth and sea is Aphrodite and the Crone Hecate belongs to the underworld. Aphrodite's sway extends to love, marriage and family life and sometimes amorous intrigue as well. Keats refers to a few of them --

...thou gav'st Leander

breath,
Thou ledest Orpheus through
the gleams of death;
Thou madest Pluto bear thin
element;

( III. 11. 97-99 )

Leander, Orpheus and Pluto are figures in classical mythology who braved the sea, the underworld and the air for the sake of love. Leander was a youth of Abydos, in love with Hero, the beautiful priestess of Aphrodite at Sestos on the
opposite shore of Hellespont. He used to swim across to Hero, who directed his course by holding up a lighted torch. While on his wonted amorous sally, on a stormy night, Leander was drowned. Orpheus's journey to the underworld to bring back Eurydice ended in disaster because of his failure to exercise the promised restraint. Pluto, the ruler of the underworld carried away Proserpine, the daughter of Ceres, to be his queen. But Jupiter yielding to her mother's lamentations ordained that she should spend six months of the year on the Earth and the other six months in the underworld. She ultimately became linked with fertility rites.

Now, the moon-goddess, whom the poet refers to as Cynthia --

...hast sent
A moonbeam to the deep,
    deep water-world,
To find Endymion.

( III. 11. 100-103 )

Endymion is found on the golden sand of the sea-bed. He 'felt the charm to breathlessness' and experienced a sudden warmth 'of his heart's blood' Sensing Cynthia's presence, he lays his head on a pillow of sea-weed to 'taste' it.
In a letter to Reynolds, Keats describes a similar mystical sensation and associates it with immortality --

This morning Poetry had conquered...
There is an awful warmth about my heart
like a load of immortality. 2

Endymion goes past heaps of oceanic deposits, decayed carcasses, and debris of buried civilizations. He sees a --

...gold vase embossed
With long forgotten story...
... of Saturn's vintage,
mouldering scrolls
Writ in the tongue of heaven,
by those souls
Who first were on the earth;
and sculptures rude
In ponderous stone, developing
the mood
Of ancient Nox,

( III. 11. 126-33 )

Saturn, the leader of the Titans, along with Nox, the goddess of the Night is among the most ancient deities. These two represent the wisdom of age. The gold vase is the recurrent urn and represents the true poet's mythic spirit. Keats, in the above quoted lines, follows the typically Romantic anthropological theory that the early inscriptions, sculptures and monuments were forms of primeval history 'writ in the tongue of heaven'. The debris on the sea-floor that Endymion is exploring is symbolic of
the secret essence of ancient wisdom which is one of objectives of his quest. The major objective is the Moon to whom he now apostrophizes.

The passage defines a host of mystic associations with the lunar goddess that prove that the quest is a result of predetermined destiny. Endymion says that she has been a 'presence' in his life ever since he can remember. When a child, he treated her like a sister. In his boyhood, she was his teacher explaining the changes of the calendar to him --

\[
\text{In sowing time, ne'er would I dibble take,}
\text{Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake,}
\]  

(III. 11. 153-54)

The agricultural images are evocative of the fertility rites. This is further enhanced in the next few lines where he describes the Moon as the maiden who, in his youth, enlightened him about art and love. She was 'the sage's pen' 'the poet's harp' and finally 'the charm of women'. By playing the role of both his sister (who in Keats's poetry is interchangeable with the mother) and his beloved, the moon-goddess once again takes on the role of the Great Goddess and Endymion of the fertility god.
Endymion cannot, as yet, recognize the true identity of the golden-haired maiden and feels guilty about betraying his original love. He is now plunged into emotional confusion where he discovers that he loves two maidens. The moon never entirely faded from his heart 'no thy starry sway has been an under passion to this hour'. He desperately prays to the unknown goddess to forgive him for thinking of anyone but her. And immediately overpowered by fresh guilt asks the Moon to pardon him for his unfaithfulness. This state of high confusion and the inability of Endymion to decide where his true allegiance lies is the chief complication of the plot. This complication is furthered in Bk. IV with the appearance of the Indian Maid.

Endymion's meditations are interrupted by an encounter with an old man --

Upon a wedded rock this
old man sat,
And his white hair was
awful, and a mat
Of weeds were
cold beneath
his cold thin feet,
And, ample as the largest
winding-sheet
And cloak of blue wrapped
up his aged bones.

( III. 11. 193-97 )

This old man is Glaucus. Glaucus and Endymion are 'twin
brothers in this destiny'. Glaucus's appearance at the moment of Endymion's high confusion suggests that he will offer a solution. Glaucus gives Endymion a book and a wand which he had received, in his youth from 'an old man's hand' that came out of the sea. This is an archetypal motif defining a law of succession where the old and hoary yield to the new and beautiful. Keats was to exploit this theme more fully in Hyperion.

The 'old man' has a specific status in Keats's mythological poems. In Lamia the old man appears as the philosopher who forces his way into the palace of sin and exposes the deception of the snake-woman. In The Eve he appears as the pious beadsman who dies when the lovers consummate their love, thus atoning for their sins. In The Fall, he as Saturn, surrenders to Apollo, the immortal poet.

According to the original myth, Glaucus scorned the power of Aphrodite and to insult her, he refused to let his mares breed. Aphrodite complained to Zeus who permitted her to take whatever action she pleased against Glaucus. She led the mares out one night to drink from a well sacred to herself. At the games, the mares bolted, overthrew the chariot and ate Glaucus alive. This myth has
relevance to an aspect of the fertility myth which involved the sacrifice of a royal prince. Once a year, the king pretended to die at sunset. The royal prince was invested with his titles, married to the queen and killed twenty-four hours later by women disguised as horses. This ritual supposedly gave long life to the King and preserved good weather and a bountiful harvest. The Keatsian Glaucus is used as a foil to preserve the more important Endymion.

Like the myth of Alpheus and Arethusa the myth of Glaucus is used by the poet to give humanitarian significance to the quest. It also represents one of the trials that the poetic self must pass through before becoming immortal. Keats expounded the same idea in the following passage in a letter to George --

Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand different ways. 3

Glaucus had achieved a form of semi-divinity. Circe, the malignant enchantress, turned him into an old man and cursed him with death at the end of a thousand years. Glaucus informs Endymion that --
...Though thou know'st it not, 
Thou art commissioned to this fated spot 
For great enfranchisement.

( III. 11. 297-99 )

Endymion has come as the benefactor and deliverer not only of Glaucus but of the drowned lovers of a thousand year span.

Glaucus at one time had, like Endymion, led a simple and peaceful life on the seashore. But led by 'distempered longings' he plunged into the sea like Endymion had plunged into the underworld. Glaucus fell in love with the water-nymph Scylla who teased and worried him --

She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing, 
Round every isle, and point, 
And promontory, 
From where large Hercules wound up his story 
Far as the Egyptian Nile.

( III. 11. 404-7 )

Hercules was the son of Jupiter and Alcmene, a mortal woman. He was famous for his strength, courage, endurance and the ability to restore happiness to the miserable. Like Endymion and Glaucus, Hercules also belongs to the archetype of mortal heroes who have struggled
against immortal powers. The Keatsian Endymion imbibes some Herculean traits viz. endurance, fortitude and provision of happiness to the miserable.

The poet refers to the end of Hercules's story. On one occasion, Hercules and his wife had to cross a river. Hercules asked a centaur to carry his wife across. The centaur tried to run away with her. Hercules shot an arrow into his heart. As he was dying, the centaur asked Dejanira, Hercules's wife, to keep a portion of his blood and to use it as a charm to preserve the love of her husband. Dejanira soaked her husband's robe in the blood. As soon as the garment became warm on the body of Hercules, a poison penetrated his body. He tried to wrench off the garment but it stuck to his flesh and tore away whole pieces of his body. Hercules built a funeral pyre and burnt himself. Jupiter, however, ensured that only his mother's part perished. The immortal element was sent to heaven where he was admitted as a deity. Thus, in his transformation from a mortal to a deity, the story of Hercules offers a parallel to the story of Endymion.

Returning to the narrative, we find that Glaucus has been teased by Scylla into a state of 'fierce agony'. In desperation he seeks the help of the witch-goddess Circe.
Circe is also an enchantress and a magician. She has a death island, a willow grove and a cemetery. When Glaucus goes in search of her, he finds that 'Aeaea's isle was wondering at the moon.' There is an age old connection between witchcraft and the moon. The magical efficacy of charms is said to increase on moonlit nights. A spell of enchantment puts Glaucus in a swoon. When he awakes, he finds that he is in a 'twilight bower'. Here, Circe, disguised as a highly sensual maiden ensnares him in a web of sexual ecstasy. This bower is a variation of Adonis's bower of love. It represents another landmark in the poet's comparison of truth and false-hood. As there are true gods and false gods, there is also true and false love. Whereas Adonis's bower represents the very nucleus of fertility, Circe's bower represents the nucleus of decay. Circe represents the lesser mysteries of the Great Goddess. She, like the old man, is another archetypal figure in Keats's poetry. She ensnares, captivates and entralls. The pale Kings and princes in the ballad 'La belle dame sans Merci,' had been held in 'thrall'. In Lamia the snake-woman had held Lycius in 'thrall'. Thus the young witch is the idiom for lust and sin. In Endymion's story the displacement of Circe provides a psychological exorcism and he escapes the enchantment of this lustful love. However,
in Lamia and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' the heroes cannot escape, they succumb to the evil power of the witch.

One day, led by rumbling thunder and 'poisonous groanings' Glaucus reaches a spot where a gaunt, blue flame bewitches him. Circe is performing her sadistic rites --

...my arbour queen,
Seated upon an upturned forest root,
And all around her shapes,
wizard and brute
Laughing, and wailing,
groveling, serpents
showing tooth, tusk and venom-bag and sting!
Oh, such deformities!

(III. ll. 498-503)

She sits surrounded by a herd of animals that once had been men. The fodder she empties before them is a basketful of 'clusters of grapes'. In Keats's poetry the intoxication of the grape is of the worst kind. It can make men either into gods or beasts.

Circe proceeds to conduct a negative parallel of the erotic rites that had been conducted in Adonis's bower and in the jasmine bower. In the benign form, 'a dewy luxury' had been shaken over the eyes of the lover from a willow branch. In its malignant parallel Circe takes a mistletoe branch, smears it with poison from 'a black dull-gurgling
phial' and 'whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil'. The entire congregation groans like 'one huge Python'. Circe discovers that Glaucus has witnessed all this. Her vengeance is horrible. She kills Scylla and converts Glaucus into a 'gaunt wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd and lame' old man and sentences him to a sea-exile of a thousand years which he decides to devote to serving lovers who have been drowned in the sea. From one such lover, he receives a scroll that contains a prophecy --

A youth, by heavenly power
loved and led,
Shall stand before him,
whom he shall direct
How to consummate all,
The youth elect
Must do the thing, or
both will be destroyed.

( III. 11. 707-11 )

The 'youth elect' is Endymion. Led by Glaucus, he enters a cavern and beholds thousands lying 'in silent rows'. Death in this cavern is benign. It has served as an embalmer and they look 'All ruddy -- for here death no blossom nips'.

The scroll describes a complex ritual that Glaucus and Endymion now enact. Glaucus tears the scroll into tiny pieces. Then he covers Endymion with his cloak and
strikes his wand nine times. He then asks Endymion to undo a complicated knot. Endymion performs this easily --

What is it done so clean?
A power overshadows thee!
Oh brave!

(III. II. 758-59)

Endymion's power is his unswerving fidelity in love. Soon Glaucus regains his youth and the dead lovers are resurrected --

And, as he passed, each
lifted up his head
As doth a flower at
Apollo's touch
Death felt it to his
inwards - 'twas too much
Death fell a weeping in
his charnel house

(III. II. 785-88)

Death or Thantos is the brother of Sleep or Hypnos. They are the sons of Nox and have their abode in subterranean darkness. Now, death has been overpowered by true love. In this respect Newell Ford finds a parallel between Endymion and Christ --

As Christ brought salvation to men by atoning for their sins, so the faithful Endymion brings salvation to the lovers by atoning for Glaucus' sin. True he is not, like Christ, conscious of his mission, but his unwavering devotion to
Cynthia works the same miracle as Christ's unswerving devotion to God.

We see once again how Keats's mythologizing method adapts and transforms the original myth. He uses the ancient format to incorporate and project this Biblical belief. His method, thus, is different from Shelley's who used mythology mostly as an anti-Christian instrument.

Endymion along with Glaucus now gains the stature of a 'new-born god'. He leads the congregation to a 'mighty consummation' in Neptune's palace. Neptune is the deity of the waters. Triton, the merman welcomes them by blowing his conch. Nereids, the fifty daughters of Nereus and Doris, dance and sing. The palace is open and airy -- 'a golden sphere'. In contrasts with the subterranean vault of Cybele in Bk II. Cupid and Venus, welcome the lovers. Venus, once again, encourages Endymion. She assures him that 'Love will have his day/So wait while expectant'. The rejoicing lovers sing a hymn in thanks giving. Hymns were an integral part of the Athenian religious ceremonies. People conducted these rites with garlands, incense-burning and libations accompanied by hymns and dances. Keats's mythic yearnings find fulfilment in such rituals. He treats the act of worship as a manifestation of sincere devotion.
In the palace, the four sunsets blaze forth a 'gold-green zenith' above the sea-God's head' and the floor is made up 'breath-air'. In this cosmic setting, the victory of Endymion over Circe's anti-fertility designs is celebrated. Fountains of nectar and 'plunder's vines teeming exhaustless' supply inexhaustible nourishment to the multitude. An immense fertility ritual is enacted. The massive congregation make love, pulling down 'fresh foliage and converture' and competing as to 'who should be smother'd deepest in fresh crush of leaves' -- while Cupid sprinkles 'on all the multitude a nectarous dew'.

There appears on the scene a grand and majestic procession led by Oceanus. Doris, Nereus, Amphritite and also Amphion follow. At this point Endymion 'there far strayed from mortality' experiences the familiar 'giddy' and 'dizzier pains'. He cries 'O, I shall die' and in the same moment he discovers his immortal wings '...I feel my wing'. He swoons at Neptune's feet. As he is carried away by the Nereids he receives a communication from Cynthia --

Dearest Endymion, my entire love,
How have I dwelt in fear of fate! 'Tis done --
Immortal bliss for me too
thou hast won,
Arise then! For the hen-dove
shall not hatch
Her ready eggs, before I'll
kissing snatch
Thee into endless heaven.
Awake! Awake!
(III. 11. 1022-27)

This awakening, immediately after the grand fertility ritual, can be paralleled to the waking of Adonis. This is the climax of the poem. Endymion has been successful in his quest and now must return to point from which he started. Endymion awakes to find that he is back in the forest.

II

Endymion's return to the forest suggests that he is still bound to the fertility principle of the Great Goddess. He returns to the forest to Mount Latmos in autumn. The calendrical year has come to an end and the vegetation is dying. It is time for fertility god to die once again. The wheel of time must complete a full circle before the rebirth of the hero can take place. The final aerial ascent symbolizes the way out of the whirlpool of the time-cycle. The time-cycle will lose its significance
once the hero has established himself in Elysium. Life in Elysium is changeless and static. It is characterized by eternal spring and happiness.

Bk IV commences with an invocation to the English muse --

Muse of my native land!
Loftiest Muse!
Of first-born on the mountains, by the hues
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot!

(IV. 11. 1-3)

The muses, nine in number, are the daughters of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. The muses, themselves are the goddesses of literature and the arts. Keats enlists the English muse as the 'loftiest' of all. Now, as his hero launches the mystical phase of his quest, his spiritual inspiration can only be provided by the English Muse. By combining Greek and English concepts, the poet acknowledges that there are no frontiers between great literatures. Poetic inspiration, says Keats, is the only light in 'our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives'. Seeking the Muse's blessings like the 'poets' gone' he proceeds to 'move to the end'.

Endymion, back in the forest of Mount Latmos, offers
a 'hecatomb of vows' to heaven. The piteous, lamenting tones of the Indian Maid reach him 'through thorny-green entanglement/Of underwood'. The lunar goddess uses another disguise, this time associated with an Oriental pagan cult --

Ah, woe is me that I should fondly part
From my dear native land!
Ah foolish maid!
Glad was the hour when, with thee, myriads bade
A dieu to Ganges, and their pleasant fields!
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness, the ripe grape is sour
Yet I would have, great gods, but one short hour
Of native air -- let me but die at home.

( IV. 11. 30-37 )

According to Vedic mythology; the Ganges or the Ganga, the most sacred of all Indian rivers, the cleanser of sins and the giver of immortality, was originally confined to the celestial regions where it flowed from a toe of Vishnu. Sagara, a King of Ayodhya had great desire for an offspring. He performed penance with the result that one wife became mother of a single son and the other of sixty thousand sons. He prepared to perform a horse sacrifice, but Indra stole
the animal. All the sons were consumed by a fire. Sagara was informed that his sons would come to life again and rise to heaven when the Ganges flowed down to the Earth. His grandsons went through rigid penances and at length Brahma consented to grant the prayer that the sacred river should descend from the Himalayas. Shiva broke the fall of the waters by allowing them to flow through his hair and they were divided into seven streams. When the water reached the ashes of the slain princes, their spirits rose to heaven and secured external bliss.

It seems that the myth of Ganga provides Keats with a method for connecting the human and celestial regions. The Indian Maid, who is Cynthia in disguise descends to the mortal realms like Ganga. She frees Endymion from mortality and he, like the sons of Sagara, attains eternal bliss in heaven.

This adaptation of the Hindu myth serves a threefold purpose. At the level of the narrative, it provides a new angle that sustains the reader's interest. At the level of his mythic vision, it proves that Keats could instinctively recognize and adopt in his poetry familiar strains in any mythic mode. At a third level, it is a concession to the Indophile trends of his day. To use
mythological allusions from Oriental mythologies was considered to be a sign of secularism.

Endymion had emerged from his adventures under the sea tested in courage and humanity but lacking in true melancholy that Keats, in coming years was to identify with true love. In the letter to Bailey, quoted earlier, he wrote --

The simple imaginative mind may have its rewards in the repetition on his own silent working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness -- to compare great things with small -- have you never by being surprised with an old melody -- in delicious voice felt over again your speculations and surmises at the time it first operated on your soul -- do you not remember forming to youself the singer's face more beautiful that it was possible and yet with the elevation of the Moment you did not think so -- even then you were mounted on the Wings of Imagination so high -- that the Prototype must be hereafter --

The views expressed here find an illustration in a passage in *Endymion* where the Indian Maid appears as the prototype of Cynthia. Endymion responds to her through the 'repetition' of his 'simple imaginative mind's' silent working. But unable to consciously acknowledge this, he feels guilty and fears that --

I have a triple soul! Oh fond pretence --
For both, for both my love
is so immense,
I feel my heart is cut for
them in twain.

( IV. 11. 95-97 )

Endymion's love-life has a repetitiveness, -- a rather circular nature -- like the life of the fertility god. Endymion's subterranean and submarine journeys have resulted in his falling in love again and again. His sense of guilt makes him wish he were dead or at least 'whole in love' --

....What is this soul then? Whence
Came it? It does not seem
my own, and I
Have no self-passion or
identity
Some fearful end must be.
Where, where is it?
By Nemesis, I see my
spirit flit
Alone about the dark.

( IV. 11. 475-80 )

These lines reflect Keats's views on the evolution of the immortal poet. The idea is discussed at length in the following passage --

As to the poetical Character itself... it is not itself -- it has no self -- it is everything and nothing -- It has no charac-
ter.... A 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.... 6

Endymion, in his mythical quest, has so far been, "in for and filling some other Body." He has been in the Earth and in the water. He will now go in the air. He has also discovered that he has no Identity. Depressed that the Indian Maid has terminated any chances that he had of achieving immortality, he says that she has stolen 'the wings wherewith I was to top the heavens'. She is his 'executioner' and he begs her for some 'music dying'.

Music, according to Keats, was a charm that dispelled all problems. This was stressed in another letter to Bailey where he had wished --

\[O \text{ that I had Orpheus lute} \text{ and was able to cha} \left[\text{c} \right]^{7} \text{ away all your Griefs and Caros} \text{ --} 7\]

The Indian Maid sings the Song of Sorrow. Her verses define the sorrows of lovers as the essential aesthetic ingredient for the natural world. Maidens die so that roses may bloom. She traces the pattern of death and rebirth in nature. The song concludes with a host of
confused familial associations. Sorrow, to whom the maiden's song is addressed is 'her mother/And her brother/Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade'. The Great Goddess represents many relationships. She is Endymion's mother, nurse, sister, playmate and lover and Endymion is her baby, brother and "wooer in the shade".

The Indian Maid finishes her song and then relates her experiences with Bacchus. Of all the achievements of Bacchus, his expedition into the East is most celebrated. He travelled on a chariot drawn by a lion and a tiger and was accompanied by Pan, Silenus and all the Satyrs. His conquests were easy and without bloodshed. Attracted by the 'merry din' and 'mad dancing' the Indian Maid 'rushed into the folly'. She joined the rout that travelled through the East conquering the 'Sleek Arabians', the 'Osirian Egypt', the 'parched Abyssinia' until --

Great Brahma from his mystic
heaven groans
And all his priesthood moans,
Before your; Bacchus' eye
wink turning pale

( IV. 11. 265-68 )

Osiris was among the chief deities of the ancient Egyptian pantheon. Great Brahma is the supreme god of the post-Vedic Hindu mythology. Bacchus's triumph over Osiris and
Brahma anticipates the law of succession of *Hyperion*.

Endymion is touched by the maid's pathetic tale and promises to be her 'sad servant evermore'. This once again is an expression of the hero's humanitarianism. Endymion, once again, experiences the duality of his emotions and describes his own state as 'madness'. He hears a call echoing through the forest 'Woe! Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?' Mercury, the messenger of the gods, swoops down, touches the mountain side with his wand and is gone. Two jet-black steeds with large dark-blue wings spring out from the turf. Endymion and the Indian Maid mount the horses and set off on an aerial journey. As the horse soars, the poet and Endymion combine --

Muse of my native land,

am I inspir'd ?

This is the giddy air,

and I must spread

Wide pinions to keep here.

(IV. 11. 354-56)

The winged horse enters the magnetic field of *Hypnos* or sleep who is 'slow journeying' towards Heaven as it has been communicated in a dream that 'a young man' is going to win immortality and also to 'espouse Jove's daughter'. Affected by the magnetic field, Endymion, along with the
Indian Maid, falls asleep and dreams. His dream is a kaleidoscopic presentation of the experiences of a newly immortalized god. Endymion dreams that 'brotherly he talks/ To divine powers'. He handles Apollo's bow and Athena's shield and Jove's thunderbolt. Hebe offers him a heavenly drought and the Seasons and the Hours perform a dance. Then Endymion beholds Diana's bugle and all at once the crescented goddess appears. He remembers the Indian Maid and the Moon-goddess disappears. He turns towards the Indian Maid and finds that she too is disappearing. He tries to kiss her hand 'and, horror! kiss'd his own'. The narcissistic element of Keats's myth surfaces once again. The quested object so far had been the elusive goddess. In merging with Endymion, the poet establishes the poetic immortality as another quest-objective.

The experience makes Endymion feel humble. He feels that he has been, like Icarus 'soaring too audacious'. He retires to the Cave of Quietude which he describes as --

Happy gloom!
Dark paradise: Where pale
becomes the bloom
Of health by due; Where
silence dreariest
Is most articulate; where
hopes infest;
Where those eyes are the brightest for that keep  
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.  

( IV. 11. 537-42 )

The passage contains a rebirth ritual. It is said that whoever enters the Cave of Quietude first takes a cool draught from an 'urn'. The draught is richer than anything 'young Semele' drank in 'her maternal longings'. Semele was the mother of Dionysius. When she was seven months pregnant, Jupiter appeared in thunder and lightening before her. She had a miscarriage. Jupiter, the father-god, saved the baby by putting it into his own thigh till the end of the natural term of pregnancy. This is the Olympian patriarchial myth established to fit the new orthodoxy once the relevance of coition to child-bearing had been admitted and the physical superiority of the male had been recognized. The new myth was a rationalization of some of the mysteries associated with the Great Goddess. The strange double-birth of Dionysius offers an analogy for the spiritual birth of Endymion symbolized by his experiences in the cave. The 'spirit-home' of the cave is said to be 'pregnant' to 'save' Endymion. Endymion returns to a foetal state in its depths. This is the last sleep of the mythical sleeper. It is both a sleep of
healing and sleep of preparation where physical powers are gathered together for the transformation of the sleeper.

While the hero is sleeping, a host of preparations is going on for the wedding. The constellations Hesperus, Aquarius, Castor and Pollux, the lion, the Bear, the Centaur, Andromeda collect to celebrate 'Cynthia's wedding and festivity'. Zephyrs, the west wind and Flora, the goddess of flowers are asked to bring --

Cool parsley, basil sweet, 
and sunny thyme --
Yes, every flower and leaf 
of every clime
All gathered in the dewy morning.

( IV. 11. 577-79 )

Acquarius, the water-bearer is asked to brighten 'the Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night'.

Endymion, however, unaware of these preparations descends to the Earth on his winged steeds. 'His first touch of the earth went night to kill'. He encounters the Indian Maid on the mountain side and plans a tranquil future with her --

Let us ay love each other, 
Let us fare
On forest-fruits, and never, 
never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below.

( IV. 11. 626-28 ).

He says he will sacrifice a kid to Pan and ask the god's forgiveness for being --

Presumptuous against love,
against the sky,
Against all elements,
against the tie
Of mortal each to each,...

( IV. 11. 639-41 )

However, this cannot be. The natural cycle at this juncture does not permit a return to the state of vegetative innocence. The leaves of the forest are falling and there can be no return to the green Eden of the beginning. The Indian Maid, too sorrowfully declares 'I may not be thy love./ I am forbidden.' Following the mythological multi-relations concept of the Great Goddess he invites the Indian Maid to be another sister to him. Endymion's own sister, Peona, appears on the scene. She tells him that the soothsayers have received good tidings. A golden age is going to descend on Latmos. The Shepherds will enjoy perpetual health and goodwill.

Endymion has passed through various ordeals, so the benefits will be reaped by his people. This will be the
effect of his marriage. The magical effect of his mating with Cynthia is to be manifested in the regenerative principle of the Earth.

Endymion now prepares for his ritual death. He lies in the forest all day 'and so remain'd as he a corpse had been'. He is not aware that this 'death' is the sacrifice to ensure perpetual renewal of life --

...Whence will befall,
As say these sages, health perpetual
To shepherds and their flocks;

(IV. 11. 830-32)

The Indian Maid and Peona appear on the scene like "Chilly-fingered spring" Midst music from the "choir of Cynthia" Endymion is reborn. The new Endymion now asks for 'heaven's will, on our sad fate'. Before his amazed eyes the Indian Maid is transformed into Cynthia and Endymion too, is immortalized --

...'twas fit that from this mortal state
Though shouldst, my love, by some unlooked for change
Be spiritualized.

(IV. 11. 99-93)

The poem concludes with the following piece of
They vanished far away! Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.
(IV. 11. 1002-3)

Marriage is a traditional link in the fertility rituals. Before a new fertility cycle can be launched a marriage must take place. Keats however leaves it out of his narrative. He also does not describe how the newly metamorphosed god Endymion looks in his divine form. Keats's Great Goddess had appeared significantly as the 'veiled Cybele' in the subterranean abyss of Bk II. The hero, having returned unscarred from his mythical quest has discovered the sanctuary of the divine regions. Further unravelling of the mysteries of creation are only for his immortal ears. The mortal reader, along with Peona, is left in a state of 'wonderment'.

III

Endymion is written in the heroic couplet. The form may be defined as the episodic epic commonly used by Spenser. Keats's sensibilities, to a great extent, resemble
Spenser's. Spenser was an early and distinct influence. The pictorial richness, the soft, drowsy music, the themes of love, chivalry, romance and adventure are recognizably Spensarian. Keats's readings of Spenser stimulated and sustained his own poetic theory.

*Endymion* can be considered as a confessional poem, resulting from the inner conflicts of the poet himself. Shelley's *Alastor* had put forward certain questions regarding the human world and the state of the poet. Shelley's hero found no satisfaction in the troublesome human world and bitterly frustrated in his quest died in solitude. *Endymion*'s quest led him to a deeper understanding of the actual world and the common experiences of mankind. Shelley's hero was a solitary visionary whereas *Endymion* shared and understood universal experiences. The parallels between the two poems may be the result of Keats's attempt to offer a rebuttal to Shelley's poem.

Keats also made some use of Drayton's *The Man in the Moon*. Drayton's *Endyrion and Fhoebe* was not easily accessible in the days of Keats. Finney describes both Drayton and Keats as poets of the cult of the moon. The basic inspiration for the feast of Pan, the description of Glaucus's cloak, the aerial flight of *Endymion* and the
disguises of the moon goddess is possibly drawn from Drayton's poems.

Lyly's *Endymion*, too, may have furnished Keats with some designs for his poem. The incident of Corsites and Tellus in Lyly's poem seems to have been in Keats's mind while he was writing the Glaucus-Circe episode. Similarly, Mrs. Tighe's *Psyche* had appealed immensely of Keats. A strange knight serves as Psyche's protector. In the end, in answer to Psyche's prayers he reveals himself as Cupid. This kind of identification of the divine and the human occurs in Keats's poem as well.

Shakespearean and Virgilian echoes can be traced throughout the poem. The erotic passages remind one of *Venus and Adonis* whereas the description of the wreck at the bottom of the sea is reminiscent of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Following the tradition of Chaucer and Spenser, Keats prolongs his verse by knitting and interknitting smaller myths into the primary one. The myths of Glaucus and also of Arethusa serve Keats for highlighting his humanitarian symbolism. The incidental reference are sometimes exotic and ornamental such as the description of the procession of Bacchus. At other times, they are used
to create emotional depth and to add warmth and human feeling to his verse as in "Dryope's lone lullings of her child" or "blind Orion hungry for the morn". It is possible that Keats was not always conscious of the full potential and relevance of every mythic image and illusion that he used, to his ground myth viz. the myth of the Great Goddess. However, as mythic images and archetypal situation have their own unconscious organization and design, they were easily and effectively absorbed in the major myth.

When Endymion was first published, it was received with a good amount of hostility by the critics of Keats's own period. Modern critics vary in their reactions. One group, which includes Mrs. Owen, Colvin, Finney and Murry feel that Endymion appears coherent only if read as an allegory. Their allegorical interpretations range from metaphysical and neoplatonic interpretations to an account of the psychic process involved in aesthetic creativity. Critics like Amy Lowell, Newell Ford and Pettet feel that the poem is more symbolic than allegorical. In defence of their view, Pettet has pointed out that Keats himself never claimed any allegorical pattern for his poem.

Since Keats's plot in Endymion takes the form of
a quest, it can be defined as a venture of the poet's mind into its own hidden depths. Keats had encountered the major images and schemes of his plot in his reading of the translations of classical works in medieval and Elizabethan poetry and most of all in his school-stage classical dictionaries. The ritual behaviour, the archetypal situations, the various gods and goddess had undergone much unconscious and conscious psychological processing before being crystallized in his mind. Whenever parts were missing, he took care to supply them.

The core of the action in Endymion is the fertility myth. According to traditional mythology the fertility god descends into a dark seed ground, is reborn as the son and consort of the Great Goddess. He mates with her, provides fertility to the animate world and then at the end of the seasonal cycle dies once again. The three critical junctures are birth, marriage and death. These processes supply the ground myth for Endymion. Endymion plays the role of the fertility god and Cynthia plays the role of the Great Goddess. The recurrent archetypal figures are the old man and the beautiful witch. The archetypal object is the urn and the archetypal location is the bower.

There is a distinct method in Keats's mythology.
Read within the mythic format Endymion ceased to be merely 'an amalgam of visual and other sense impressions'. It becomes symbolic of deeper associations. It highlights the profound sensitiveness of Keats to ancient mythology. It also focusses on the high intensity of the need to achieve an imaginative return to the cool, chaste world of the past. The quest of Endymion is really the quest of young Keats for his medium. At the end of his quest this medium, is identified as mythology. Mythologizing furnishes him with the mode for voicing his inner impulses and cravings.
Notes and References

1. These lines anticipate 'Ode to Autumn' - 'For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.


10. Bush, loc.cit.,