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Brno studies in English. 1960, vol. 2, iss. 1, pp. 7-[54]

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/117994>

Access Date: 27. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

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THE PROBLEM OF SPENSERIAN INSPIRATION
IN KEATS'S POETRY

There is no doubt about John Keats's permanent place among the English poets — “with Shakespeare”, to quote Matthew Arnold. But in spite of his exceptional talent Keats could never have achieved the admirable blend of beautiful form and truthful content that characterises his best verse, if he had not devoted so much time and energy to the study of great literature, from Chaucer to Shelley and from Homer to Schiller. Considering the “brief candle” of his life, the amount, extent and variety of his reading is amazing. At the same time, his intellectual interests and social activities were by no means limited to literature. He enjoyed and appreciated not only poetry, but also the beauty of nature and art, the Elgin Marbles as well as living men and women. He proved an excellent student of medicine and was well informed about contemporary science, philosophy and politics. The mainspring of his highest poetic endeavours was indeed the search for truth as well as beauty, the two aspects of reality which he had finally come to regard as essentially identical. A poem or any work of art was to be a concrete realisation of beautiful truth or truthful beauty.

In his search for a proper understanding of the business and aim of poetry, of the legitimate place of the poet in society, as well as of his own education for the vocation of poet, Keats was greatly assisted by the study of great writers, ancient, medieval and modern, foreign and English. A complete list of the books he had read has not yet been compiled.¹ But we know that his most influential models and masters were, with few exceptions, those who loved humanity and stood on the side of progress. As an ardent humanist and progressive romanticist, Keats was naturally attracted to Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Hazlitt, Scott, Leigh Hunt etc. among his own countrymen, and to the old and new classics like Homer, Virgil, Dante, Boccaccio, Cervantes, Molière etc. whom he could read in the original or in translation.

Except in his earliest period, however, Keats's attitude to books and authors was seldom uncritical. The only poet with whom he never found any fault was Shakespeare. From his other favourites he drew whatever he regarded as true and beautiful and rejected at once, or after a time,

whatever disagreed with his experience and mature judgement. He never hesitated to alter his opinion of an author or book when his own development made such a change of taste or view inevitable. Among the most marked instances of this kind of radical change are Keats's later views concerning the poetry and character of Wordsworth, Byron, Leigh Hunt or Milton.

The purpose of the following study is to ascertain and illustrate the *general* character of literary influence on Keats's mind and art by means of a detailed analysis of one *particular* case, viz. the impact of Spenser on Keats's poetry and poetic theory. The relation between Spenser and Keats has been chosen as the most fitting subject for such critical examination in the first place because Spenser's poetry exercised a powerful influence not only on Keats but on the majority of English romantic and pre-romantic poets; and in the second place, because of all major literary inspiration apparent and demonstrable in Keats's poems, that of Spenser was the earliest as well as the most enduring. It was Spenser who inspired Keats's earliest known and preserved poem, **Imitation of Spenser**, while the Spenserian stanza and poetic devices were used by Keats in his last composition, the unfinished satirical romance, **The Cap and Bells, or the Jealousies**.

IMITATION OF SPENSER

It is one of the well-established facts in Keats's poetic career that his latent talent was awakened by Spenser's poems, particularly **Epithalamion** and **The Faerie Queene**. They induced him to write and to emulate "the poets' poet". The only plausible explanation of this momentous decision must have been a deep spiritual kinship between the two poets, particularly their passionate love of nature, their free and direct approach to sensuous reality, their enthusiasm for the beauty of the material world and the dignity of man.

The circumstances of Keats's acquaintance with the seductive charm of Spenser's poetry are related by Keats's friend and literary guide Charles Cowden Clarke a long time after Keats's death as follows:

It were difficult, at this lapse of time, to note the spark that fired the train of his poetical tendencies; but he must have given unmistakable tokens of his mental bent; otherwise, at that early stage of his career, I never could have read to him the "Epithalamion" of Spenser; and this I remember having done, and in that hallowed old arbour, the scene of many bland and graceful associations — the substances having passed away. At that time he may have been sixteen years old; and at that period of life he certainly appreciated the general beauty of the composition, and felt the more passionate passages; for his features and exclamations were ecstatic... That night he took away with him the first volume of the "Faerie Queene", and he went through it, as I formerly told his noble biographer, (i. e. Monckton Milnes, lord Houghton — K. Š.) "as a young horse would through a spring meadow — ramping!"²

From Clarke we have also a vivid description of the place where he used to read Spenser with Keats when the poet came to see him at Enfield:

From the playground stretched a garden one hundred yards in length... and further on was a sweep of greensward, beyond which existed a pond, sometimes digni-

fied as "The Lake" . . . At the far end of the pond . . . beneath the iron railings which divided our premises from the meadow beyond, whence the song of the nightingales in May would reach us in the stillness of night, there stood a rustic arbour, where John Keats and I used to sit and read Spenser's "Faerie Queene" together, when he had left school, and used to come over from Edmonton, where he was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond the surgeon.³

The resemblance between the real scene described by Clarke and the romantic landscape of Keats's **Imitation of Spenser** is interesting. Yet no one to my knowledge has noticed it. "Beds of simple flowers", "a little lake" which "round its marge reflected woven bowers" and other images in Keats's first poem clearly seem to be Keats's reminiscence of the familiar surroundings where he first read **The Faerie Queene**. They were the real nucleus round which cluster colourful images derived from Spenser and others or invented by their author's romantic fancy. Thus from the very beginning it is characteristic for Keats's creative method that his pictures of nature, however idealised, are built upon the solid foundation of concrete sense impressions and personal experience. None of his poems, not even this avowed "imitation" of Spenser is a mere literary copy. Keats's master and model, as well as the incentive of his first attempt at word-painting in verse, was not only the poetry of Spenser, but also nature. The consequence for our attempt at an asthetic evaluation of Keats's **Imitation of Spenser** is obviously to regard it rather as an original echo of Spenser's poetry or as a composition after the manner and in the spirit of Spenser's art than an imitative literary exercise. The technical skill with which Keats had mastered the difficult Spenserian stanza also speaks against the view that the poem actually represents Keats's first attempt at writing in verse. It seems much more probable that it was preceded by earlier attempts which have not come down to us.⁴

For lack of sufficient external evidence, however, we have to rest content with the generally adopted opinion of its early origin and with the fact that it is at any rate the earliest poem of Keats's that we are cognizant of. It cannot be later than April 1814. The question how long before the earliest dateable poem by Keats (the sonnet **On Peace**) it was written remains to be answered. A satisfactory solution of this problem would be welcome especially for the students of Keats's poetic evolution as it would securely establish the actual rate of his progress from start to finish. Unfortunately, the evidence at our disposal is both slight and conflicting. Keats himself did not make his first poem public before 1817 when he included it in his first volume of **Poems**. His friend Clarke was not aware that it was his earliest poem. This was first established by the testimony of Keats's later friend, Charles Brown, in the memoir which he gave to Keats's first biographer, Lord Houghton:

Though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. It was the **Faerie Queene** that awakened his genius. In Spenser's fairy-land he was enchanted, breathed in a new world, and became another being; till enamoured of the stanza, he attempted to imitate it, and succeeded. This account of the sudden development of his poetic powers I first received from his brothers and afterwards from himself. This, his earliest attempt, the **Imitation of**

Spenser, is in his first volume of poems, and it is peculiarly interesting to those acquainted with his history.⁵

According to Brown, the **Imitation of Spenser** was written after Keats had completed his eighteenth year, i. e. after October 31, 1813. Clarke, on the contrary, in his **Recollections** (quoted above) thought that at the time when he introduced him to Spenser's poetry, Keats was about sixteen years old. But Clarke's memory for dates was very poor, as he admitted in a letter to Milnes in December 1846,⁶ and besides he had long believed that the poet was not older, but younger than his brother George. We may therefore safely dismiss his dating of Keats's first acquaintance with Spenser as a pardonable error. Brown's testimony, supported as it is by the fact that there is no marked distinction in quality between the **Imitation of Spenser** and the other juvenile poems written by Keats in 1814 and 1815, justifies the conviction that Keats did not begin writing poetry before the beginning of 1814, or, if we wish to be very cautious, before November, 1813. To put the date of Keats's *début* back to 1812 — as for instance in John Middleton Murry's edition of Keats's **Poems and Verses** (1949) — seems unwarrantable and implies that in the long gap of nearly two years between the first poem and the other early poems known to us Keats either wrote nothing or had not developed at all in his art and destroyed or rejected all he wrote during that period. Neither of these eventualities is plausible in view of our knowledge of Keats's steady and rapid development since 1814. These considerations have led me personally to the conclusion that Keats's earliest poem was most probably composed in the early months of 1814. Whatever else may Keats have in common with Spenser, he certainly differs from him in the late manifestation of poetic talent.

The assumption of the late beginning of Keats's poetic career — corroborated by some of the acknowledged authorities on Keats⁷ — enables us to trace Keats's development almost without break down to the beginning of 1820 when the fatal illness brought it to an abrupt end. It settles rather than solves the *historical* problem of Keats's first poetic attempt. The other, *critical* problem which the poem offers remains to be tackled. This can be most effectively done if we approach the text (quoted below for our readers' convenience) from the point of view of its relation to Spenser's poetry, in other words if we try to ascertain how far it is what it professes to be, an imitation, and how much of it may be regarded as an original creation. But first of all, let us read the poem:

*Now Morning from her orient chamber came
And her first footsteps touched a verdant hill
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of the rill;
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
And after parting beds of simple flowers,
By many streams a little lake did fill,
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.*

*There the kingfisher saw his plumage bright
Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below;
Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light
Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow;
There saw the swan his neck of arched snow,
And oared himself along with majesty;
Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show
Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.*

*Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle
That in that fairest lake had placed been,
I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile;
Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen:
For sure so fair a place was never seen,
Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye:
It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen,
Of the bright waters; or as when on high,
Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the coerulean sky.*

*And all around it dipp'd luxuriously
Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide,
Which, as it were in gentle amity,
Rippled delighted up the flowery side;
As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried,
Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem!
Haply it was the working of its pride,
In strife to throw upon the shore a gem
Outvieing all the buds in Flora's diadem.*

At first sight, we might be inclined to agree with Claude L. Finney who regards the **Imitation of Spenser** as "too faithful a reproduction of Spenser's art to be an immediate expression of a first reaction".⁸ But after a closer comparison with the **Faerie Queene** we arrive at a different conclusion, at least with regard to the faithfulness of Keats's reproduction of Spenser's art. Except in the verse-form and perhaps in certain mannerisms of poetic diction, Keats does not merely reproduce Spenser and his disciples and imitators, from Milton to Leigh Hunt, but succeeds in giving voice (through their idiom, it is true, yet unmistakably) to his own emotional experience of nature and life, as I have already indicated and shall attempt to demonstrate more fully further on. Meanwhile I will try to formulate my general impression of the poem as it stands in its own right.

The four stanzas of the poem form an organic and complete whole in theme and sentiment. They paint a highly romanticized picture of idyllic natural scenery in which the objective reality of the peaceful corner of English countryside in the neighbourhood of old London is fantastically enriched and recreated by Keats's imagination with the aid of fresh impressions from the poet's favourite books. It was, I believe, deliberately composed as an artistic fragment, or rather an extract from a non-existing longer poem, most probably a romantic epic like Spenser's **Faerie Queene**.

Its intentionally fragmentary character is in some editions emphasized by the printer's device of asterisks before the first and after the last stanza. This, however, is superfluous because the intention to pass the poem off as an extract from a longer composition is quite clear from the text itself. The poem begins with the adverb "Now" which has here the function of a conjunction and necessarily implies some preceding statement. And after reading the last stanza, we naturally expect a continuation of the narrative which has been interrupted by the four descriptive stanzas. We know the scene of action and its atmosphere as well as its effect on the poet-painter who has evoked it before our inner eye. We can only imagine the action and its characters. Yet aesthetically the piece is complete and self-sufficient as any landscape painted by an artist. It would seem that Keats in his **Imitation of Spenser** tried not merely to reproduce Spenser's art, but to produce a finished work on the model of popular anthologies that used to bring selected extracts from longer works as so-called "beauties" from this or that poet. His choice of Spenser for this interesting experiment as well as the lyrically pictorial character of the fragment are typical of Keats's constant bent towards sensuously concrete but emotionally coloured representation of beautiful nature.

The limited, probably intentionally narrow theme of the **Imitation of Spenser** cannot, of course, represent either the whole of Spenser or the whole of Keats. It avoids, for instance, the moralistic tendency of Spenserian allegory, nor does it attempt to emulate Spenser's epic qualities. At the same time, it does not reflect Keats's political sympathies and social interests, as do some of his early and later poems, though the allusions to Dido and Lear in the third stanza testify to the poet's sincere sympathy with human suffering and to his desire to do something that could alleviate it. These very limitations, however, tend to enhance the aesthetic integrity of Keats's first poem. Both in conception and in execution the **Imitation of Spenser** claims to be regarded as a largely original, though imperfect, work of art. Nor is its aesthetic value so poor as to justify the severe judgment of Amy Lowell, who condemned it as "very weak", and found only one image in it:

*"It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen
Of the bright waters"*

worthy to be praised.⁹

So far we have argued for Keats's original contribution to the poetic imitation of Spenser, which he professed to undertake in his first literary attempt, by pointing out its artistic unity of conception and execution, its vital connection with the young poet's experience of beauty not only in poetry but also in objective natural reality, its partly instinctive, partly deliberate thematic limitation to those spheres of reality and art which he could understand and express (this is the first known manifestation of Keats's capacity of self-education and self-criticism). Now we shall have to support our argument by a more detailed examination of the relation between Keats's **Imitation** and Spenser's **Faerie Queene**, its principal source of inspiration and model of poetic art.

Spenser's greatest poem contains, of course, thousands of lines that

might have been stored in Keats's retentive memory and some of which he might have had in front of his eyes during the very act of composition. Which of them were most likely to have inspired him to emulation is suggested by the following recollection of Charles Cowden Clarke:

Like a true poet, too — a poet "born, not manufactured", a poet in grain, he (Keats) especially singled out epithets, for that felicity and power in which Spenser is so eminent. He hoisted himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, "What an image that is — 'sea-shouldering whales!'"¹⁰

The image of "sea-shouldering whales" occurs in the twelfth canto of the second book of the *Faerie Queene* describing the perilous journey of Sir Guyon to the Bower of Bliss. From this an obvious conclusion has been deduced that Keats derived most of his images and expressions in the *Imitation of Spenser* from that part of Spenser's epic. Finney, for instance, illustrates Keats's alleged indebtedness to Spenser's imagery and diction by a number of parallel passages in the texts of the two poets, those from Spenser's epic being mostly in the second book of the *Faerie Queene*.¹¹ He also finds parallels and verbal echoes in Keats's poem with other poets than Spenser, such as Milton, Gray, Thomson, Mrs. Tighe etc. Yet his catalogue is neither exhaustive nor convincing, and similar superficial resemblances could be found, if we took the necessary pains to look for them, in many other instances.

I will give only one that, as far as I know, has not been noted either by Finney or anyone else. The image of the morning in the first stanza of Keats's poem: "Now Morning from her orient chamber came, etc." was composed, as Finney says, "in emulation of such images of Spenser as the following:

*Now when the rosy fingred Morning faire
Weary of aged Tithones saffron bed,
Had spread her purple robe through dewy aire,
And the high hills Titan discovered . . .*

(*F. Q.*, I. ii. vii. 1-4)"

while the phrase "amber flame" in Keats's poem "was a reminiscence of the sunrise in Milton's *L'Allegro* (vv. 58-61):

*. . . on hillocks green
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light . . ."*¹²

But he has missed another couple of equally close parallel images with Keats's lines, one in Spenser:

*At last the golden Oriental gate
Of greatest heaven gan to open fair,
And Phoebus fresh . . .
Came dancing forth . . .*

(*F. Q.*, I. v. ii. 1-4),

and the other in Milton's **Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity**;

*And the slope sun . . .
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.*

Without venturing to claim that the above quoted parallels have actually influenced the content and form of Keats's lines, as Finney does for *his* parallels, I have presented them to the reader in order to demonstrate the need for caution in the search for sources and verbal echoes, especially in cases when a poet uses symbols, personifications, classical allusions and other conventional poetic devices that have become the common property of several generations of writers before him. The particular convention of telling the time of day — in our example the sunrise — through images from classical mythology was characteristic of Renaissance poetry and exploited *ad nauseam* by both classicist and pre-romantic poets of the eighteenth century. In this respect it lacked originality both in Spenser's poetry and in that of his numerous admirers including Keats.

Painstaking search for real or hypothetical sources of Keats's diction and vocabulary will inevitably make us see his first poem as much more imitative than it is. If indulged in uncritically it would arrive at the conclusion that even a Shakespeare was a mere echo of other men's words and phrases. And it has led Finney to the entirely unwarranted conclusion that Keats "drew the substance and style of his poem from the poetry of Spenser and Milton instead of from his own personal experience in Enfield and Edmonton".¹³ I hope that I have sufficiently demonstrated the falseness of this interpretation. But to make my argument still more convincing I will have to deal not only with the points in which Keats's poem *resembles* the poetry of Spenser, but also with those in which it *differs* from its literary model.

To read the whole of Spenser's **Faerie Queene** is no easy task. Even Keats, I think, may not have read the whole of it before he wrote his **Imitation**, inspired, as has been shown, mainly by one episode in one of the six books of the epic. The bulk of the poem, of course, would not deter him from finishing it. On the contrary, he would have regretted that the author was prevented to complete the work which, to use Hazlitt's words, "paints nature, not as we find it, but as we expected to find it; and fulfils the delightful promise of our youth".¹⁴ As a matter of fact, I believe that apart from Clarke's account there exists no better record of the impression the **Faerie Queene** must have made on Keats than Hazlitt's excellent lecture on Spenser.

But the **Faerie Queene** is not only a collection of delightful stories and beautiful descriptions of fairy land written in rich and enchantingly melodious verse. It is also a serious and complicated allegory. And as Hazlitt says again: "... some people will say . . . that they cannot understand it on account of the allegory. They are afraid of the allegory, as if they thought it would bite them: they look at it as a child looks at a painted dragon, and think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not meddle

with them. Without minding it at all, the whole is as plain as a pikestaff.”¹⁵ That is exactly what Keats did with Spenser’s poem when he decided to imitate it. He refused to meddle with, or to take any account of, its latent allegorical meaning.

For Spenser, however, the allegorical meaning of the **Faerie Queene** was of no secondary significance. We can see it from his **Letter expounding his whole intention**, addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh (dated 23. January 1589) which is too long to quote here. Our purpose will be equally well served when we cite a briefer, but also authentic explanation, as it was reported by Spenser’s friend Lodowick Bryskett in his **Discourse of Civil Life** (in 1606). Bryskett asked Spenser to expound to him and some other friends the principles of moral philosophy because “he is not only perfect in the Greek tongue but also well read in philosophy, both moral and natural”. But Spenser declined with this explanation:

For sure I am that it is not unknown to you that I have already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse, under the title of a Faerie Queene, to represent all the moral virtues, assigning to every virtue a knight to be the patron and defender of the same; in whose actions and feats of arms and chivalry the operations of that whereof he is the protector are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same to be beaten down and overcome. Which work, as I have already well entered into, if God shall please to spare me life that I may finish it according to my mind, your wish, Master Bryskett, will be in some sort accomplished . . .¹⁶

Though Keats, in his later career, was not opposed to the expression of moral tendency in allegorical form, though he used it but rarely, in his **Imitation of Spenser** he gave no indication that he was aware of Spenser’s proper intention.

The hero of the second book of the **Faerie Queene**, from which Keats drew his inspiration, is Sir Guyon, the patron and defender of the virtue of Temperance. The embodiment of one form of intemperance, sensual pleasure, is the enchantress Acrasia whose palace, the Bower of Bliss, Sir Guyon destroys:

*But all those pleasant bowers, and Palace brave,
Guyon broke down with rigour pitiless;
Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
Them from the tempest of his wrathfulness,
But that their bliss he turned to balefulness.
Their groves he felled; their gardens did deface;
Their arbours spoil; their Cabinets suppress;
Their banquet houses burn; their buildings raze;
And, of the fairest late, now made the foulest place.*

(*F. Q.*, II, xii. 83.)

It seems certain that Spenser’s own model for the character of the seductive and cruel enchantress Acrasia was Circe in the **Odyssey**. But neither Homer nor Keats were capable or inclined to deal with sensuous beauty and sensual delight with such pitiless cruelty as Spenser’s Knight of Temperance. Though they despised coarse sensuality, lust and dissipation,

the rigidly puritanical hatred of beauty in nature and human life that is manifested in the behaviour of Sir Guyon was alien to their humanistic conception of happiness. Even in Spenser the destruction of the Bower of Bliss, described in glowing terms as a terrestrial paradise, affects us as an incongruous, jarring discord in a harmonious symphony. We cannot but feel that here Spenser obeyed his sense of moral duty, the duty of a believing protestant, rather than his instinctive and sincere love of the sensuous delights of life. The destruction of the Bower of Bliss formed a necessary part of his moral allegory. It was a sacrifice he had to bring to the uncompromising commandments of his religious faith. The unresolved contradiction between Spenser the humanistic poet and Spenser the Christian moralist, which breaks the aesthetic unity of his work (in this part of it, at least), is not reflected in Keats's **Imitation**. Not only because its theme was limited to Spenserian panegyric on the material beauty of the world, but also because Keats had never succumbed to the life-denying principles of orthodox Christianity.¹⁷

We don't know what was Keats's reaction to such stanzas in the **Faerie Queene**, like the one we have just quoted and discussed. But we can safely surmise that it must have been negative because the philosophy implied therein is the very opposite of his own view of life and art. A poet who in his first attempt at verse-writing expresses so clearly his belief in the healing and comforting power of beauty as Keats did in the lines:

*Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle
That in that fairest lake had placed been,
I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile;
Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen,*

could never agree to see it destroyed without protest. And to this belief Keats remained faithful all his life. Indeed, it is one of the fundamental principles of his aesthetics in which beauty, poetry and human life are never separated without harm.

The conception of the consoling and elevating power of beauty, natural or artificial, is not Keats's original idea. But whether it was inspired or merely strengthened in Keats's mind by his enthusiastic reading of Spenser, it is impossible to say. For our examination, however, it is more relevant that, whatever its origin, it became so firmly rooted in Keats's theory of art as to appear recurrently throughout Keats's poetic career. One formulation of the idea appears, for instance, in the significant poem **Sleep and Poetry** (1816), where we read that "poesy should be a friend to soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man". The same idea is implied in the famous dictum "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" with which Keats introduced his **Endymion**, written in 1817. And near the close of his short life, in the **Fall of Hyperion** (1819), Keats expressed again his belief that a poet's mission is to be a "humanist" and a "physician to all men".

When he wrote his **Imitation of Spenser** Keats could not yet trust his own gift and skill to create "a thing of beauty" that would console Dido or Lear in their bitter sorrow. Therefore he did not attempt to emulate his master Spenser's description of the beautiful Bower of Bliss and to

“tell the wonders of an isle / That in that fairest lake had placed been”. Most probably he thought of the following two stanzas from the second book of the **Faerie Queene** as an achievement still beyond his own powers:

*It was a chosen plot of fertile land,
Amongst wide waves set, like a little nest,
As if it had by Nature's cunning hand
Been choicely picked out from all the rest,
And laid forth for ensample of the best:
No dainty flower or herb that grows on ground,
No arboret with painted blossoms dressed
And smelling sweet, but there it might be found
To bud out fair, and throw her sweet smells all around.*

*No tree whose branches did not bravely spring;
No branch whereon a fine bird did not sit;
No bird but did her shrill notes sweetly sing;
No song but did contain a lovely ditt.
Trees branches, birds, and songs, were framed fit
For to allure frail mind to careless ease:
Careless the man soon woax, and his weak wit
Was overcome of thing that did him please;
So pleased did his wrathful purpose fair appease.*

(*F. Q.*, II. vi. xii—xiii)

Both Spenser and Keats acknowledge the power of beauty and poetry to captivate the soul of man, to charm him and make him forget his cares and sorrows. But there is an important distinction between the good or evil uses to which the beauty of nature and art may be put, a distinction clearly discerned and expressed by Spenser, but not by Keats. The ill effect of beauty on man is illustrated in the **Faerie Queene**, for instance, by the charming song of the mistress of the beautiful island, Phaedria, by means of which the young knight is averted from his good intentions and falls a victim to Phaedria's sensual seductiveness. Both Acrasia and Phaedria exploit their own beauty and the beauties of nature and poetry in order to seduce young men to vice and sin. Thus Spenser never fails to stress that it is only good and moral beauty which is worthy of our admiration, only morally edifying art which is the true art. In Keats's early poetry there is no such clear distinction between false and true beauty or art. He takes the view that beauty and art are always good; their effect on men, therefore, can never be harmful. In his later development, however, these early inclinations towards regarding sensuous beauty as a good in itself, is considerably modified. and in **Endymion**, for instance, Keats rejects sensuality and false beauty no less uncompromisingly than did Spenser in the story of Acrasia.

Still, it would be uncritical not to see that in his earlier period (including **Endymion**) Keats's inclination to overrate the role of sense impressions and unbounded fancifulness in poetic creation, on the one hand, helped him in reproducing in his poems the material world in its beauty of plastic form and colourful impressiveness, but on the other

hand, prevented him from penetrating deep enough below the surface of things. It took comparatively long before he became aware of its harmful effects and by strict selfdiscipline succeeded in getting it under control.

In conclusion of our analysis of Keats's first poem, a few words may be added concerning its *metrical form*. It is evident that the young poet had mastered the difficult Spenserian stanza with great success. In the comparatively few instances when he employed it (in three shorter poems, including the **Imitation**, and in two long compositions, **The Eve of St Agnes**, and the unfinished **Cap and Bells**) he achieves nearly the same virtuosity in the rhythmical structure and rhyme variation as Spenser himself. Finney believes and attempts to demonstrate, in his book on the evolution of Keats's poetry, that Spenser's versification influenced Keats also in his odes.¹⁸ Keats, he argues, developed the metrical form of his great odes out of the form of Spenser's nuptial ode **Epithalamion**, which belongs in the tradition of the Greek choral ode with its triple movement of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. But the argument is not sufficiently convincing. There is a certain resemblance between Spenser's ode and Keats's odes, but their differences are more striking than their common metrical qualities. Their chief common point is the employment of occasional trimeters beside the regular pentameters. But in the number of lines in individual stanzas Keats's usage differs from that of Spenser's **Epithalamion**; and the rhyme-pattern in Keats's odes is also entirely different from Spenser's. Therefore I think Garrod's hypothesis, that Keats developed the metrical form of his odes from the sonnet-form, nearer to the truth.¹⁹

Numerous echoes of Spenser's ideas, images, stylistic devices and typical poetic expressions, as well as the influence of his versification, and especially his exquisite sensitiveness to the musicalness of language witness to the power and extent of Spenserian inspiration throughout the poetic output of Keats from 1814 to the publication of his **Poems** in 1817. After the completion of **Endymion**, however, it is more difficult to discover clear traces of Spenserian inspiration in Keats's work. Not because they are rarer, particularly as verbal echoes and direct allusions, but because they are much more subtly hidden. By that time Keats must have learnt all that Spenser could teach him. Having attained intellectual and artistic maturity he was now better equipped to profit by the lesson and at the same time to assert his own experience and poetic style. In the poetry composed after Keats's return from the walking tour through the North of England and Scotland Spenserian inspiration appears not much abated but it is completely assimilated and perfectly blended with Keats's own independent art and craftsmanship. Literary criticism can no longer (with a few exceptions) point at a phrase or an image in Keats's mature poetry and say: "This is Spenser", as it could often do in the examination of Keats's earlier work.

The prevalence of Spenserian inspiration in Keats's **Poems** of 1817 and in those early works which he did not include in this collection is indicated by the poet himself in the choice of the motto for the **Poems** from Spenser:

*What more felicity can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight with liberty.*

The lines are taken from one of the most delightful stories of Spenser's **Muiopot-**

mos, or **The Fate of the Butterfly**, a poem abounding with sensuously concrete images of the beauties of nature and the pleasures of love.

There are, however, many more direct pointers to Spenser as Keats's favourite master in the first published volume of his poetry. Of these most allude to characters in the **Faerie Queene**, for instance, to the Knight of the Red Cross (the hero of the first book) in the sonnet **Woman! when I behold thee**; to the magician Archimago in the epistle **To my Brother George** and in the **Specimen of an Induction to a Poem**; to Calidore (the hero of the sixth book) in the sonnet **Woman! when I behold thee** and in **Calidore**; to Belpheobe and Una in the epistle **To my Brother George**; and to Britomartis in the poem **On receiving a curious shell**. To complete the list, there is the reference to Pastorella in **Endymion**.

Besides references to Spenserian heroes and heroines, Keats several times paid tribute to Spenser himself. In the epistle **To Charles Cowden Clarke**, where he expressed his gratitude to Clarke for having taught him "all the sweets of song: The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine; What swelled with pathos, and what right divine," he expressly mentions

*Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,
And float along like birds o'er summer seas;*

confessing in this manner that it was predominantly the euphony of Spenser's verse that attracted him.

In another juvenile poem, the **Ode to Apollo**, written probably in February, 1815, Keats described the enchanting music of Spenser's poetry as follows:

*A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.*

This ode voices Keats's enthusiastic reverence for poetry in general, but its documentary value is the first-hand evidence it gives us of Keats's most favourite poets at the beginning of his literary career. It also reveals his capacity in grasping some of the most characteristic features of their individual contributions to world poetry. The common distinction of the great bards of Apollo is that they "sublimely told / Heroic deeds, and sang of fate". It is not without significance for Keats's early, and partly even for his later preference and taste that he regarded as greatest the heroic epic poets, Homer, Vergil, Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser and Tasso. Shakespeare, who wrote no epic, is mentioned in this connection because Keats was thinking of the content rather than the literary form used for its communication. As to the individual merits of these great poets, Homer "creates the most intense surprise" by the penetration of his vision of human life, as though the "soul" of the blind poet "looked out through renovated eyes"; Vergil delights us by the "melodious sweet majestic tone of his lyre", above all when he "tells of grief around a funeral pyre"; after Vergil there follows a long silence, until it is broken by the "lofty strain"

and "tuneful thunders" of Milton's verse, while "Passions" tread the stage speaking through their Masters's, Shakespeare's, inspired and "inspiring" words; Spenser appears to his admirer Keats chiefly as the poet of chivalry and virtue, and so does Tasso, whose "ardent numbers float along the pleased air, calling youth from idle slumbers" and "melting the soul to pity and to love".

Keats's avowed admiration for heroic poetry and his life-long ambition to write a rousing epic or a great tragedy was inconsistent with his actual lyric talent and achievement. The only long narrative composition, **Endymion**, that he succeeded in completing according to plan, though not without great effort and certainly not to his own full satisfaction, is not an epic, either heroic or romantic. Nor can it claim to contain truly dramatic moments. His successfully finished tales in verse, **Isabella**, **The Eve of St Agnes**, and **Lamia** owe their epic plot and dramatic effectiveness to the fact that Keats took their story from Boccaccio, Burton or from popular legends (partly also from his own private experience), rather than his own invention. In **Hyperion** and the revised version called the **Fall of Hyperion** Keats had made considerable progress in epic composition, chiefly through his study of Milton, but he found it impossible to complete the epic. **Hyperion** has remained a fragment, however imposing.

Even less successful were Keats's two dramatic attempts, the fragmentary Shakespearean historical tragedy, **King Stephen**, and the finished, but rather weak tragedy **Otho the Great**, in which, moreover, the plot is largely the work of his collaborator Charles Brown. It is evident that neither his sincere admiration for heroic epic and dramatic poetry, nor his uncommon critical understanding of Shakespeare, Milton or Spenser were sufficient to make Keats a great dramatist or epic poet. It is irrelevant to indulge in speculations about his further development if he had lived to a greater age. And if we attend only to his actual work we have to admit that none of his epic or dramatic compositions excel in specifically epic or dramatic qualities, while his very best, artistically most perfect creations are essentially lyric in character.

"SPECIMEN OF AN INDUCTION TO A POEM" AND "CALIDORE"

Spenser's **Faerie Queene** encouraged Keats to attempt a "tale of chivalry", in which he intended to emulate not so much Spenser himself — that, he felt, was still far beyond his powers — as Leigh Hunt, the great admirer and ardent disciple of Spenser, whose **Story of Rimini** (published in 1816) inspired his sonnet "**Who loves to peer up at the morning sun**".

Keats actually wrote two poems, **Specimen of an Induction to a Poem** and **Calidore**, that may be regarded as fragments of the intended and never completed tale of chivalry. Both had to be broken off because of the lack of Keats's epic talent and invention which has been discussed above. The first attempt consists of 68 rhymed iambic pentameters; the second, perhaps the continuation of the first, contains 162 lines and ends abruptly in the middle of the last line. The failure again proves that neither ambition nor rich fancy are enough to produce a long epic. They have to be supported

and fed by experience and a sound knowledge of human character. And these two necessary qualities the young poet still lacked.

In the **Specimen of an Induction to a Poem** the author three times emphatically announces his epic intention with the words:

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry

in the first and eleventh line of the poem, and with a slight change:

Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry

in its 45th line. But the force which makes him assert and reassert his resolution to write a tale of chivalry is not strong enough to enable him to realise his intention. All that this force, which might be interpreted as a combination of ambitious intention and poetic fantasy, puts at the author's disposal as his necessary raw material is a medley of picturesque images, a number of vivid details from a larger picture which however has not been revealed to him and therefore cannot be embodied in artistic unity.

The general impression the **Specimen of an Induction to a Poem** makes upon the reader is similar to that we might receive from a series of coloured specimen photographs from a film version of some medieval chivalrous romance, presented for our inspection at random, and omitting anything that might suggest to us the concrete plot and content. It is true, we are able to form a vaguely general idea of the period and its atmosphere, but very little more. And we suspect that the young poet himself was simply indulging in the free play of his fantasy, excited by his reading of Spenser, Hunt and others, and hoping that some more definite plan would emerge from this chaotic day-dreaming. But the result was merely this series of detached and fragmentary pictures: large white plumes bending in a thousand graceful ways as if dancing in the breeze; the lance pointing slantingly athwart the morning air; some lady sweet hailing it from the top of some old battlement as her stout defender; the warrior grasping the lance in battle or in tournament; the dying tones of minstrelsy; the splendour of the revelries; dancing ladies in the castle-hall; and last of all, the arrival on the scene of a gentle, but proud knight which might be regarded as the real beginning of the tale of chivalry, but leads only to the following apostrophe of Spenser and Hunt, Keats's two favourite patrons and models:

*Spenser! thy brows are arched, open, kind,
And come like a clear sunrise to my mind;
And always does my heart with pleasure dance,
When I think on thy noble countenance:
Where never yet was ought more earthly seen
Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green.
Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully
Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh
My daring steps: or if thy tender care,
Thus startled unaware,
Be jealous that the foot of other wight
Should madly follow that bright path of light*

*Traced by thy loved Libertas; he will speak,
 And tell thee that my prayer is very meek;
 That I will follow with due reverence,
 And start with awe at mine own strange pretence.
 Him thou wilt hear; so I will rest in hope
 To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope:
 The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers;
 Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.*

So, after all, it seems that the picture of the knight coming "so proudly by" and "more proudly" reining in "the swelling of his ample might" preceding the above cited apostrophe of Spenser, represents not a character in the tale of chivalry, but the inspirer of that tale, Spenser (with a side glance at the author of the **Story of Rimini**, Spenser's loved Libertas, Leigh Hunt).

Keats's invocation of Spenser's genius at the close of his **Induction to a Poem** which was never to be written makes it abundantly clear that the young poet was aware of his poetic inferiority to Spenser. The fragment of the tale of chivalry, in which he dared to emulate the author of the **Faerie Queene**, entitled **Calidore**, fully confirms this inferiority. The hero of the story is of interest only so far as he is a reflection of his creator; there seems to be no doubt that in the young Calidore we see the embodiment of Keats's own youthful ambitions, longings and dreams. If he had finished the poem, it would probably resemble more closely the romantic tales of Lord Byron than the **Faerie Queene** or even Hunt's **Story of Rimini**. As it is, we learn much about the character of the hero, but next to nothing about the story in which he was to play the principal part. Besides the hero's character, Keats's attention is almost wholly concentrated on the detailed presentation of the place of action, to be more precise, on the scenic setting of the opening scene, which is, by the way, also the last scene of the fragment.

The description of the place of action, especially the natural scenery, is the most valuable part of the poem, from the aesthetic point of view. As in most of his romantic landscapes Keats lays the main stress on the reproduction of those impressions which are awakened in the sensitive soul of the hero (in this case identical with the author) by beautiful objects of nature rather than on a faithful description of the outside world of senses. Keats's descriptive method is that of impressionistic idealisation. **Calidore** is too long for full quotation and therefore we shall have to acquaint the reader with its content only in outline, quoting verbatim the most characteristic ideas and images.

Young Calidore is introduced to us "padding o'er the lake" and eagerly "awake to feel the beauty of a silent eve". He is "well-nigh overwound" by the calm beauty of the water, the "cool blue sky", "the pleasant green of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean so elegantly o'er the water's brim" and "the freaks and dartings of the black-winged swallow" almost touching the surface of the lake in its flight. After a while his boat "glides into a bed of water-lilies... near to a little island's point... whence Calidore might have the goodliest view of this sweet spot of earth". "No man with a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan nature's clear beauty,

could pass lightly by objects that looked out so invitingly on either side;" and Calidore "greeted them, as he had known them long before".

The objects seen by Calidore are painted, one by one: "the swelling leafiness" of the trees; "the lonely turret, shattered, and outworn" standing proudly among fir trees; "the little chapel with the cross above"; "green tufted islands"; "sequestered leafy glades, that through the dimness of their twilight show large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow of the wild cat's eyes".

From enraptured watching and dreaming the youth is suddenly awakened by "a trumpet's silver voice". The warder had caught sight of "white coursers prancing in the glen", dear friends coming to the castle of Calidore's father. "So Calidore pushes off his boat most eagerly, and soon upon the lake skims along, deaf to the nightingale's first under-song"; "Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches, before the point of his shallop reaches those marble steps that through the water dip" and he enters the castle and "leaps along the oaken floors of halls and corridors".

He sprang into the court "just as two noble steeds and palfreys twain" brought the visitors, two knights and two ladies. "What a kiss, what gentle squeeze Calidore gave each lady's hand! How tremblingly their delicate ankles spanned!" while he was helping them to dismount. But the "kind voice of good Sir Clerimond" tears him out of the "sweet trance" when, for a moment, "all the soft luxury", that is to say the young bodies of the two ladies, "nestled in his arms". And he "devoutly pressed against his forehead a hand heaven made to succour the distressed; a hand that from the world's bleak promontory had lifted Calidore for deeds of glory". Then a picturesque description of the second knight, "the brave Sir Gondibert", is given and Calidore is introduced to him.

The last scene describes the guests and Calidore seated "in a pleasant chamber", at their ease, and Calidore listening eagerly to Gondibert's talk about knightly deeds, and "gallant spurning of all unworthiness". "While brimful of this, he gave each damsel's hand so warm a kiss, and had such manly ardour in his eye, that each at other looked half startlingly; and then their features started into smiles sweet as blue heavens o'er enchanted isles." Meanwhile the night is coming and it's time to retire to rest. "Sweet be their sleep."

As is clear even from this abridged reproduction of the poem, its character is decidedly non-dramatic and non-epical. In the essentially lyrical images we find the peculiar blend of realistic and romantic elements which is typical not only of Keats's poetry, but of the entire English romanticism.

The details of natural scenery and the descriptions of young Calidore's emotions and moods, especially of his emotional reaction to the "soft luxury" of the beauty of nature, the charm of young women, or the call of heroic adventures and feats of chivalry, are the result of observation and private experience only in part; mostly, however, they are the product of Keats's youthful imagination actuated and supported by his reading of Spenser and Hunt. The distinction between real and literary inspiration of some detailed images is clearly discernible. The picture of the natural scenery, for instance, is largely a faithful reflection of the general character of southern English countryside, with its typical fauna and flora, the

swallows, little copses and woods, its brooks and birches, foxgloves and dock leaves. In this picture Keats could rely almost entirely on his own experience and have recourse to second-hand knowledge only for such set pieces of medieval romances as the chapel, the turret of a ruined castle, the architecture of Calidore's home, or the steel armour of Sir Gondibert.

A similar blend of real and literary inspiration is Keats's portrait of his youthful hero. In Calidore's eager, enthusiastic, courtly, tenderly sensual, and all the same sincerely admiring attitude to the young ladies, for instance, we catch a glimpse of Keats's own relation to women as we know it from his other poems and from his private correspondence. Calidore's desire to do deeds of knightly valour in aid of the weak and oppressed as well as his admiration for heroes obviously reflects Keats's own ambitions, social and poetical, and his well-known reverence for the fighters for liberty and the great poets of the past and present. In this respect, Calidore is a self-portrait of Keats; and in Sir Gondibert, no doubt, we may discern an idealised portrait of Keats's patron Leigh Hunt, whom, at the time, Keats adored as the living ideal of a patriotic poet.

We do not know whether this identification of the author with his hero was intentional or not. If it was, then **Calidore** might have been — if completed — a private allegory of the type of the later **Endymion**. As to the portrait of Hunt in Gondibert, our assumption is strongly supported by the fact that in the composition of **Calidore** Keats had Hunt in mind, as shown by the echoes of Hunt's vocabulary, style and versification. The principal literary model, however, was Spenser's **Faerie Queene**, not Hunt's **Story of Rimini**. Therefore it will not be out of place to compare Keats's Calidore with Spenser's hero of the same name. This comparison will prove that Keats, while professedly emulating Spenser, was no slavish imitator, but used his knowledge of Spenser's poetry only as a kind of spring-board for independent creative effort.

One of the strongest bonds between Keats and Spenser was their common love of nature. And in **Calidore**, as we have shown, the poetic image of the beauty, and beneficent effect, of nature on a sensitive human being forms an essential element in the poem's composition and artistic intention.

It might seem that the sixth book of the **Faerie Queene**, entitled **The Legend of Sir Calidore, or of Courtesy**, which incited Keats to write his tale of chivalry, had also given him an example how to express his own deep love of nature, apparently through the very first stanzas of its introduction:

*The ways, through which my weary steps I guide,
In this delightful land of Faery,
Are so exceeding spacious and wide,
And sprinkled with such sweet variety,
Of all that pleasant is to ear or eye,
That I nigh ravished with rare thoughts' delight,
My tedious travel do forget thereby;
And when I gin to feel decay of might,
It strength to me supplies, and cheers my dulled sprite.*

And we should not forget that "this delightful land of Faery", through which Spenser travels, is England, as Spenser explained in his introduction to the second book of his epic with the following words in the fourth stanza:

*And thou, O fairest Princess under sky,
In this fair mirror mayst behold thy face,
And thine own realms in land of Faery . . .*

Spenser's fairy land is an allegorical picture of England; and its natural scenery has its prototype in the concrete countryside where both he and Keats were born and had their homes. The resemblance between the landscapes of Keats and Spenser is only partly due to the former's imitation of the latter; it is much more the natural result of the fact that both Spenser and Keats painted the same country. Also Spenser's conviction that the "sweet variety" of beautiful nature will "supply to him strength" when he is weary and "cheer his dulled spirit" only confirmed Keats's own belief in the healing and lifting power of beauty in nature, as he expressed it in the **Imitation of Spenser, in Sleep and Poetry**, or in the **Fall of Hyperion**.

And now let us examine and compare the character of Keats's Calidore with Spenser's Calidore, the pattern and defender of Courtesy.

Spenser's Calidore is not only a pattern of courtesy, "the ground of all goodly manners and root of civil conversation", but also a "full stout and tall" warrior, "well approved in battailous affray", universally beloved because "he loathed leasing, and base flattery, and loved simple truth and steadfast honesty". Thus we are told in stanzas one to three of the first canto of **The Legend of Sir Calidore**. The virtue which he personifies and embodies is a unity of manliness with justice and goodnatured sympathy. Though he is capable of showing mercy to those evil-doers who repent of their crimes and will reform, he fights resolutely with the Blatant Beast, i. e. calumny, and defends with all his might the weak and oppressed.

These manly qualities are not yet fully developed in Keats's Calidore, who is supposed to be the same person in his earlier youth. They are found in his character, as far as it has been delineated by Keats, only in germ. That is what might be rightly expected; but Keats failed to indicate the presence of certain typical features of Calidore the man in his portrait of Calidore the youth even in the bud, as it were, while other, mostly negative characteristics are unduly exaggerated. It is almost impossible to imagine that a young man of the type depicted by Keats in his hero might grow up to be a man of the type presented by Spenser in his Knight of Courtesy. In other words, we cannot accept Keats's Calidore as a psychologically truthful portrait of Spenser's hero in his youth.

Keats also failed to grasp the basic quality of Spenser's hero, courtesy. Or, if he did grasp it, he certainly failed to realise his conception in his own hero's character. I would almost say that he has given courtesy the very meaning which Spenser condemns as false courtesy. Keats's young hero is too polite and modest in his behaviour towards men (though these men are old and brave enough to deserve such reverence), and in his behaviour to women he is too gallant, almost irreverently so. It can be explained by his youth and impulsiveness, but though these qualities are just those we know to have been characteristic of the young Keats, they are not in agreement with our idea of Spenser's Calidore when young.

By endowing Calidore with many of his own temperamental qualities, particularly in relation to women, Keats revealed again his incapacity of creating epic or dramatic characters different from himself. (Calidore's attitude to the young ladies corresponds very closely to Keats's sentimentally chivalrous and at the same time rather unpleasantly sensual relation to women which he later self-critically condemned in one of his letters, when he confessed that he used to class women in one category with roses and sweets.)²⁰ For some of the sentimental excesses in Keats's poem some critics blame the harmful influence of Leigh Hunt's example. But to be fair to Hunt we should admit, as did Keats himself, that this particular weakness, was as much Keats's own as his friend Hunt's poetry.

Owing to Keats's self-portraiture in Calidore, this character resembles Spenser's young knight Verdant, seduced by Acrasia and released from her clutches by Sir Guyon, rather than Spenser's Calidore. But Verdant could not have been Keats's model for young Calidore, who is certainly intended to represent a positive, not a negative character. The result of the comparison of Keats's poem with Spenser's **Faerie Queene** seems to suggest this conclusion: Keats's **Calidore** was inspired by Spenser's book, particularly by its **Legend of Sir Calidore**, but in the portrait of Spenser's hero as a young man it is a psychological failure. On the other hand, if it is regarded as Keats's attempt at self-portraiture, it reflects faithfully both Keats's enthusiastic love of nature and his attitude to men and women in the years of his early maturity. It also shows that Keats at the time of the composition of **Calidore** had still a long way to go to achieving that "negative capability" that he later found in Shakespeare, and for even partial success in creative writing had to rely only on private, subjective experience and on literary models.

* * *

Spenserian ideas, images and verbal expressions are found in nearly all juvenile poems written by Keats from 1814 to 1816. Spenser was his favourite author not only at Edmonton, but also during his medical studies in London. This we learn from the following recollections of his fellow student Henry Stephens:

Having a taste and liking for poetry myself, though at that time but little cultivated, he regarded me as something a little superior to the rest, and would gratify himself frequently by showing me some lines of his writing, or some new idea which he had struck out. We had frequent conversation on the merits of particular poets, but our tastes did not agree. He was a great admirer of Spenser, his **Faerie Queene** was a great favourite with him. Byron was also in favour, Pope he maintained was no poet, only a versifier. He was fond of imagery, the most trifling similes appeared to please him...²¹

Amy Lowell has found in the first volume of Spenser, which used to belong to Keats, frequent notes and marks made by Keats's own hand to point out lines or passages that struck him as fine or interesting. These markings show that Keats was *not* pleased with even the most trifling similes, as Stephens stated in his memoir, but that he was attracted chiefly by such images that strongly affected his own imagination either on account of their aptness or euphony, or by originality and depth of thought.²²

Keats's first volume of **Poems**, published in 1817, confirms, however, the general truth of Stephens's testimony as to Keats's enthusiasm for Spenser. In these poems we find many Spenserian archaisms and turns of speech, some of which look almost like verbatim quotations. Actually, there is but one direct quotation, which is duly printed in inverted commas, in the epistle **To George Felton Mathew**: "and make a sunshine in a shady place"; it comes from the **Faerie Queene**. Echoes of Spenserian images and free reproduction of characteristic Spenserian moods or attitudes are especially striking in the three sonnets on woman, in the epistles **To my Brother George** and **To C. C. Clarke**, and in the two longest poems in the volume, **I stood tiptoe** and **Sleep and Poetry**. To distinguish, however, between direct echoes of Spenser and indirect Spenserian influence through Spenser's imitators, especially Leigh Hunt, is very difficult.

SPENSER AND KEATS'S CONCEPTION OF POETRY

During the first two to three years of Keats's literary career Spenserian inspiration, as we have seen, was most often inseparably merged with the influence of later Spenserians, particularly Leigh Hunt, and manifests itself most conspicuously in the emotional and stylistic character of Keats's poetry because it affected mainly the young poet's temperamental sensibility and his craftsmanship. It was not until the close of this first period in Keats's poetic evolution, i. e. about the second half of 1816, that the idealistic philosophical and aesthetic views of Edmund Spenser began to take a firmer hold of Keats's intellectual speculation concerning above all the cognitive and social function of art and poetry. This intellectual, as we might call it, phase of Spenserian inspiration culminated in the ideological meaning of Keats's allegorical epic **Endymion**. Here we will discuss its manifestation in an earlier and less ambitious but still important poem **Sleep and Poetry**, written in the autumn of 1816.

What first draws our attention to the possibility of Spenserian influence in **Sleep and Poetry**, is its motto from the pseudo-Chaucerian poem **The Flower and the Leaf**. We know that Keats became acquainted with Chaucer rather late, certainly later than with Spenser, and it seems very probable that he became interested in his poetry just because Spenser, in his **Shepherd's Calendar** (known to Keats very well), gratefully acknowledged Chaucer (whom he calls Tityrus) as his teacher and called him the God of shepherds (i. e. poets):

*The God of shepherds Tityrus is dead,
Who taught me homely, as I can, to make.*

Such high praise could not but make a deep impression on Keats, especially as it was most likely confirmed by the experienced critical judgments of his friends, Clarke, Leigh Hunt and later of William Hazlitt.

Clarke informs us that **The Flower and the Leaf** was the first poem by Chaucer Keats had read; and he says it was in February, 1817. As by that date Keats's **Sleep and Poetry** had been long finished and was in the hands of the printers to be published in the **Poems**, Amy Lowell infers that its

motto from Chaucer's poem must have been added to the manuscript copy as an after-thought. But Clarke's chronological data are seldom reliable, and moreover, certain unmistakable allusions to **The Flower and the Leaf** in the text of **Sleep and Poetry** have convinced me that Keats had read the poem wrongly attributed to Chaucer before he began his own poem or while he was at work on its composition at the latest.

To convince the reader that it was so I must first acquaint him with the **Flower and the Leaf**, its character and content, by reproducing — passim — what H. S. Bennett has to say about it:

The Flower and the Leaf . . . belongs to the second half of the fifteenth century. Scholars have been unable to agree as to its authorship: Skeat thought that it was by a woman but his conjecture has not been accepted . . . The unknown writer, however, was a poet of distinction . . . Hazlitt used a passage from this work to illustrate Chaucer's outstanding merits, and the whole poem is gracefully contrived. It tells how the poet, a woman, unable to sleep, wanders afield and takes up her station in an arbour from where she can see and hear the nightingale and the goldfinch. After a time a "world of ladies" and of knights and men at arms, all in white garments, appear. These are the followers of the Leaf, who worship the laurel. Another band of lords and ladies arrive, clad in green, who dance, and then kneel in praise before the daisy — the followers of the Flower. While the former party rest in the shade of a laurel tree, the company of the Flower suffer from heat, are buffeted by hail and rain, and present a bedraggled appearance to those beneath the laurel. The latter succour them . . . and in good time "They passed all, so pleasantly singing / That it would have comforted any wight" . . . The poet is told [that] the followers of the Leaf are those who have been chaste, brave, and steadfast in love, while the followers of the Flower are those who have lived in idleness, and cared for nothing but hunting, hawking, and playing in meads. The party of the Leaf are led by Diana, of the Flower by Flora . . . The life of devotion and restraint is opposed to one of pleasure and indulgence. Yet both are so much a part of life as we know it that the poet, while expressing a preference for the Leaf, does not exile the Flower, and the story ends with the departure of the two parties to sup together . . .²³

When we compare the **Flower and the Leaf**, which contains many realistically truthful pictures of nature closely observed by the poet's own eyes though often expressed through conventional images and expressions, with Keats's poem, we find that besides a general resemblance in the two authors' attitude to nature and to human pleasures there are other more definite indications of Keats's acquaintance with this allegory. The first occurs in the following lines from Keats's apostrophe of Poesy that will

*bring to me the fair
Visions of all places: a bowery nook
Will be elysium — an eternal book
Whence I may copy many a lovely saying
About the leaves, and flowers — about the playing
Of nymphs in woods and fountains;*
(*Sleep and Poetry*, 11. 62–67)

This echoes almost verbally some expressions from **The Flower and the Leaf** (they are printed in italics), and by the conventional image of nature

as an eternal *book* from which the poet draws his inspiration and by the use of the title of the book, i. e. the poem, in the next two lines to denote the subject he will write about — the *leaves and flowers* — Keats, I believe, directly points to **The Flower and the Leaf** as the source of his inspiration.

But there are two more, only a little less striking direct allusions to that source. They are found in the well-known passage which tells us of Keats's poetic plans for the future:

*O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; . . .
. . . First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan: . . .
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places . . .
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
Will set a green robe floating round her head,
And still will dance with ever varied ease,
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees*
(*Sleep and Poetry*, 11. 95–115, passim)

The picture of the realm of Flora where the poet will see nymphs dressed in green dancing among the flowers and in the leafy woods seems to be a distinct reminiscence of the followers of the Flower whose garments are green and who are led by Flora, in **The Flower and the Leaf**. It is finally possible that Keats's rather reluctant resolution to "bid these joys farewell" and "pass them for a nobler life, where I may find the agonies, the strife of human hearts" (**Sleep and Poetry**, 11. 122–125), which implies a moral condemnation of the idle life and pleasure-hunting of the followers of the Flower, is not in complete agreement with the moral lesson of **The Flower and the Leaf** allegory by pure chance.

But this morally earnest tone and serious intention were no mere literary convention and there is no doubt that Keats arrived at the resolution to live a nobler life and write about the agonies and the strife of human hearts from his innermost conviction of the high moral responsibility of art. Neither Chaucer nor Spenser could do anything more in this respect than encourage Keats in this view of his poetic mission and confirm it as the rightful decision.

Keats needed such encouragement and confirmation. And what our study attempts to prove is the fact that he could and did find it not only in his brothers and intimate friends, but also in books; not least in the writings of Spenser.

Spenser not only awakened the slumbering poetic talent of Keats and incited him to write, but also helped to develop and modify Keats's theory of poetry, incidentally teaching him how to use some creative methods, for instance the method of allegory. From **The Faerie Queene**, though its religiously moral latent meaning was alien to his own way of thinking about the problems of life, Keats was able to see the advantages such a method could bring to one wishing to give concrete and vivid expression of ideas that are difficult to understand. He attempted to apply this method, at least in certain parts, to his philosophical abstract speculation not only in **Endymion** and **Hyperion**, but also in **Sleep and Poetry**,

and occasionally in such lyric pieces as **The Ode on a Grecian Urn**, or **La Belle Dame Sans Merci**, not to speak of **Lamia** or **The Fall of Hyperion** and **The Cap and Bells**.

Keats was conscious of the aid of Spenser's aesthetics and poetics in the deeper realisation and formulation of his own speculative conclusions. Spenser's great achievement in poetry was to Keats only a justification of the truthfulness of Spenser's view of life and art. Brooding on Spenser's poetry quickened the crystallisation of Keats's recognition that there can be no good poetry without significant social content and conscious aim as there can be no real beauty without truth. Therefore Keats's symbolic figure of the charioteer representing poetic creation does not invent and dream but listens eagerly to the voices of humanity and the world and records what he has heard "with a hurrying glow" (cf. **Sleep and Poetry**, 11. 126—154).

In his survey of the historical development of English poetry (in lines 162—180 of his poem) Keats must have thought not only of Shakespeare or Milton, but also of Spenser:

O ye whose charge
It is to hover round our pleasant hills!
Whose congregated majesty so fills
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place
So near those common folk!...

It is the tradition of these old poets which is taken up by the new romantic generation: "for sweet music has been heard in many places". The whole passage, too long for quotation but very important for anyone studying Keats's relation to English poetic tradition and to the poetry of his own time, culminates in the lines already quoted in our study which apodictically state that the "great end of poesy" is:

*that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man.*

The same idea is repeated, though in different words and less strongly, in the passage where Keats speaks of himself and his ardent hopes:

*All hail delightful hopes!
As she was wont, th'imagination
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,
And they shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.*

Keats was conscious of his hitherto modest poetic success. But he knew that despondence was not the right mood in which to strive after success.

*What though I am not wealthy in the dower
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow*

*Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
 Of man: though no great ministring reason sorts
 Out the dark mysteries of human souls
 To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls
 A vast idea before me, and I glean
 Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen
 The end and aim of Poesy. (11. 284—291)*

In the following lines, however, he significantly fails to find clear words for a definition of this "vast idea", unless he means what he had said about "the great end of Poesy" in the preceding lines. Yet he succeeded in voicing quite clearly his desire and passionate resolution to reach the goal of his poetic ambition. And the whole train of emotional speculation is closed in the movingly rhetorical, almost painfully frank outcry:

*Stay! an inward frown
 Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
 An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle,
 Spreads awfully before me. How much toil!
 How many days! what desperate turmoil!
 Ere I can have explored its widenesses.
 Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees,
 I could unsay those — no, impossible!
 Impossible! (11. 304—312)*

The effective image of the long, weary and dangerous journey to the goal of poetic success as a vast and uncharted ocean which must be explored by him, poetically expresses Keats's state of mind at this moment in his speculation about his own literary future. And I believe that he was largely helped to find this expression of his feeling and idea by an image in Spenser's **Faerie Queene**, describing Sir Guyon's voyage to the Bower of Bliss.

When Spenser's Knight of Temperance, Sir Guyon, and his companion, the pious old palmer, have narrowly escaped the two perils of Scilla and Charybdis, they sail in a small boat on a vast sea, till they perceive many islands:

*So forth they rowed; and that Ferryman
 With his stiff oars did brush the sea so strong,
 That the hoar waters from his frigate ran
 And the light bubbles danced all along,
 While the salt brine out of the billows sprong.
 At last far off they many islands spy
 On every side floating the floods among.*

(*F. Q.*, II. xii. 10)

The resemblance between Keats's and Spenser's images was certainly no case of simple imitation. Its causes were much more subtle, and Keats need not even have been aware that his metaphor was not entirely original. But his knowledge of **The Faerie Queene** was so deep that it actually became part of his consciousness, not only the furniture of his memory. As he

identified himself with Spenser's Calidore (cf. our analysis of his **Calidore** in the preceding section), so he may have discovered a certain affinity between himself and Sir Guyon, between his imagined future progress to the goal of poetic greatness and Guyon's adventurous and perilous but victorious voyage to meet his enemy. There is also a further slight resemblance between Keats and Guyon in the fact that Guyon had found a wise and friendly companion in the old palmer, while Keats had found such help and good advice in his older and more experienced friends, especially Leigh Hunt. And we know, from the poem itself, that **Sleep and Poetry** owed its first conception to one night spent by Keats in Hunt's hospitable house. Keats, lying on the sofa in Hunt's study, did not sleep that night because

*The very sense of where I was might well
Keep Sleep aloof: but more than that there came
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame
Within my breast; so that the morning light
Surprised me even from a sleepless night;*

He resolved on that very day to begin the poem. And we know that Keats's friendship with Hunt, a great admirer of Spenser's poetry, kept awake and supported Keats's natural enthusiasm for Spenser.

All these circumstances have contributed to make allusions to Spenser, echoes of his imagery and expression, as well as the tendency to assimilate his ideas about poetry and life, a matter of course in a Keatsian poem of the type of **Sleep and Poetry**. And I would not discuss them so minutely if I could find that they have been at least noticed, let alone examined by any other student of Keats's work.

Before leaving **Sleep and Poetry** there remains for us to prove and illustrate our opinion that Spenser may have inspired and that he at any rate helped to clarify Keats's conception of poetry. This opinion is based on the almost certain assumption that Keats knew, and studied, not only **The Faerie Queene**, but also most of the other poems written by Spenser, among them the pastoral eclogues called **The Shepherd's Calendar**. The October or Tenth Eclogue, whose theme is poetry, contains so many ideas which are echoed in Keats's poems and letters that it seems almost impossible for them not to have been known to Keats. There is, of course, still a possible alternative explanation, viz. that Spenser's ideas about poetry may have been imparted to Keats through some of his friends, Clarke, Hunt, or others; that, however, would not make any essential difference to our argument that Keats's theory of poetry was largely inspired and confirmed by Spenser.

The **Argument** of Spenser's **October Eclogue** (written by one E. K. whose identity has not yet been revealed and whom some scholars suppose to have been Spenser himself) gives a useful summary of Spenser's poem and of his idea of poetry. We will quote it therefore in full (but in modernised spelling):

In Cuddie is set out the perfect pattern of a Poet, which finding no maintenance of his state and studies, complaineth of the contempt of Poetry, and the causes thereof: Specially having been in all ages, and even amongst the most barbarous

always of singular account and honour, and being indeed so worthy and commendable an art: or rather no art, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both: and poured out into the wit by a certain **enthusiasm** [here the original has the Greek form in Greek letters], and celestial inspiration, as the Author hereof else where at large discourseth, in his book called the English Poet, which book being lately come to my hands, I mind also by God's grace upon further advisement to publish.

The Eclogue is a dialogue in rhymed stanzas between two shepherds: Cuddie, who is a poet and who might represent perhaps Spenser himself, and his friend Piers, some of whose opinions, though differing from Cuddie's, also may be attributed to Spenser as expressing his personal views.

Cuddie complains that he receives no reward for his songs though they are good and give the people pleasure. Piers tries to comfort him by arguing that "the praise is better than the price" and "the glory much greater than the gain". Moreover it is great honour "to restrain the lust of lawless youth with good advice", because Cuddie's poetry enchants and tames all evil passions. But such praise seems to Cuddie as "smoke that sheddeth in the sky", as "wind" which blows in vain. Thereupon Piers advises Cuddie to change his subject and sing about "bloody Mars", wars, and tournaments. Thus he will please the sovereigns and the knights, perhaps even Queen Elizabeth, and win both honour and money. Cuddie admits that in former times this was true. He cites the example of Vergil who had won favour with Maecenas and Augustus when he ceased writing pastoral eclogues and sang about heroic deeds. But time has changed. The mighty patrons of poets are dead and gone; and so are the knights and heroes whose feats furnished poets with "matter" on which to play. With the passing of the heroic ages, poetry declined and now "if that any buds of Poesy, yet of the old stock gan to shoot again, or if men's follies might be forced to fain, and roll with rest in rhymes of ribaldry", poetry would necessarily wither again. This saddens honest Piers who exclaims, expressing, I believe, the thoughts of Spenser:

*O peerless Poesy, where is then thy place?
If nor in Prince's palace thou doest sit:
(And yet is Prince's palace the most fit)
Ne breast of baser birth does thee embrace,
Then make thee wings of thine aspiring wit,
And, whence thou camest, fly back to heaven apace.*

Cuddie agrees with the thought, but his wings are too weak for such a flight. Only Colin (i. e. Spenser himself) could mount so high, "were he not with love so ill bedight". This surprises Piers who believes that love should rather "lift him up out of the loathsome mire" and raise his mind "above the starry sky", than clip the wings of his inspiration. To this Cuddie retorts: "All otherwise the state of Poet stands, for lordly love is such a tyrant fell: that where he rules, all power he does expel." Not love, but "lavish cups and thrifty bits of meat" give power to the poet. "For Bacchus's fruit if friend to Phoebus wise, and when with wine the brain begins to sweat, the numbers flow as fast as spring does rise." He is

convinced that if his "temples were distained with wine, and girt in garlands of wild yew twine", he could "rear the Muse on stately stage, and teach her tread aloft in buskin fine, with quaint Bellona in her equipage", which probably means that if he could only become inspired by beauty in women and valour in men, the proper theme of poetry, he would write excellent dramatic and heroic poems.

It seems clear that Keats's ideas about poetry, as expressed in his letters and poems, agree to a great extent with Spenser's conception. He was convinced that poetry both delights and instructs man teaching him how to live well and enjoy life. Therefore it is eminently useful and deserves to be not only honoured but also supported and rewarded. The poet should not only be praised by society, but morally and materially encouraged in his vocation. Keats, like Spenser's Cuddie, hoped to be able to earn a decent living by his literary activities alone; and no doubt he cherished hopes of acknowledgement and appreciation from his contemporaries as well as from posterity. Another innermost conviction which he shared with Spenser was that through his poetic creation he would be able to do some real good to the people, particularly in the field of education, but also in improving their social lot. In the last named desire he went one step further than Spenser who was satisfied to make people morally better and happier in their private lives. Finally, Keats, like Cuddie, believed that nothing but enthusiasm and noble aspiration was needed to make him excel in tragedy and heroic poetry.

Another belief that Keats shared with Spenser was the "celestial" origin of poetry or rather of poetic talent. But he was even more clearly conscious of the symbolical or allegorical meaning of this conception than Spenser and other Renaissance theoreticians who held it. What they meant was simply the belief that poetic gift was inborn and therefore true poetry could express the noblest and highest ideas, desires and emotions of mankind.

Keats's view of the history of poetry, as expressed in **Sleep and Poetry** and elsewhere, also coincides with Spenser's opinion that contemporary poetry shows a decline from the heights attained in antiquity or generally in the more remote ages, chiefly because the present age is less heroic and the public, people of all social classes and conditions, either do not understand great poetry or hold the poets in undeserved contempt. In spite of that Keats and Spenser did not allow public indifference, misunderstanding or open hostility to avert them from their noble ambitions or to make them write other poetry than such which they regarded as best.

Spenser's attitude to reality, his personal example, his views of poetry and his creative method and style all to a certain extent inspired and affected Keats's literary practice and theory. The more we study Keats's individual relation to Spenser's poetry, the more we realise that it was determined not merely by personal affinity, but by that larger and wider affinity between the "spirit of the age" of English Romanticism and that of the age of Elizabeth, as has been finely grasped and proclaimed by František Chudoba.²⁴ And it was the recognition of this affinity in poetical practice and theory that led Keats and many other romantic writers of his time, Shelley, Lamb, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth etc., to a deep study of Elizabethan lyric and dramatic poetry

which proved a rich mine for their search of guidance in literary matters. As we cannot deal with the vast problem of the mutual relation between English Elizabethan and Romantic poetry in full, we have at least tried to deal with it in one particular case, that of Keats and Spenser. And even in this limited field of research we do not claim to have exhausted its material or found a final solution that would be proof against critical reexamination.

Keats's poetic principles, for which I trust to have found inspiration or analogy in Spenser's work, have been summed up in Keats's letter to John Taylor (dated 27 Feb., 1818) in the following words:

In Poetry I have a few Axioms, and you will see how far I am from their centre. 1st. I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity — it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance — 2nd. Its touches of Beauty should never be half way thereby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the sun come natural to him — shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight — but it is easier to think what Poetry should be than to write it — and this leads me on to another axiom. That if Poetry comes not as naturally, as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. However it may be with me I cannot help looking into new countries with "O for a Muse of fire, to ascend!" If Endymion serves me as a Pioneer perhaps I ought to be content. I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read and understand Shakespeare to his depths, and I have I am sure many friends, who, if I fail, will attribute any change in my Life and Temper to Humbleness rather than to Pride — to a cowering under the Wings of great Poets rather than to a Bitterness that I am not appreciated...²⁵

This letter makes it clear that at the time when Keats was working at the final revision of his **Endymion**, he believed with Spenser and, indeed, the majority of English Renaissance poets in the naturalness, i. e. the inborn presence of poetic genius, and that he regarded as highest such poetry which possesses the greatest possible measure of beauty. But he was far from thinking of himself as a poet who has achieved the heights of his ambition. On the contrary, he was aware that he was at the beginning of his arduous journey, though he hoped that, with the assistance of a thorough understanding of Shakespeare, he would be able to come nearer to his goal and one day, perhaps, produce a work of art equal in its beauty to the beauty of nature. Taken one by one, his axioms are a free, independent paraphrase of the ideas in Spenser's **October Eclogue** and its **Argument** and Commentary by E. K.

A reflection of Keats's study of **The Faerie Queene** is discernible, in my opinion, in another important letter of Keats in which he speculates on his poetic activities and their future course. The letter is addressed to Keats's close friend and fellow-poet, John Hamilton Reynolds, and was written at Teignmouth, May 3rd, 1818. Keats gives in it the following "simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at."

Well — I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The

first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us — we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man — of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery, and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression — whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open — but all dark — all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil. We are in a Mist. WE are now in that state — We feel the "burden of the Mystery". To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote "Tintern Abbey" and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them . . .²⁶

The method and progress of Keats's speculation is imaginative and strongly allegorical, at the same time concrete and suggestive, but it is not precise and clear enough. The principal allegorical image, "a large Mansion of Many Apartments" which Man, in his physical and mental development, successively enters and explores, is not an original simile. I suggest that Keats has found both impetus and model for its conception in Spenser's **Faerie Queene**; to be more precise, in the allegorical picture of the House of Temperance, the dwelling of Alma, that is to say in Spenser's allegorical plan, the body which houses the soul. (Alma's house is described, with abundant details, in Canto IX, Book II.)

The probability that Keats's simile has its inspiration in Spenser's allegory of the human body and soul is supported by several circumstances. The first, and most important, is the close resemblance of Spenser's and Keats's allegorical image — a large house with many chambers and passages —, and the similar purpose to which this concrete picture is applied in both similes — to represent the human body and its inhabitant, the soul or consciousness. Also some details in Keats's metaphorical language of the above quoted exposition might be traced back to Spenser's allegory; for instance Keats's name of *Maiden Thought* for the first phase in the development of individual consciousness initiated by the "awakening of the thinking principle in us", may have its source in Spenser's description of Alma as "virginal", or in the stanza which describes her as follows:

*Alma she called was, a virgin bright;
That had not yet felt Cupid's wanton rage . . .*

The second circumstance, pointing but indirectly to Spenser's probable inspiration, is the fact that the allegory of the House of Temperance and of Alma is found in the *second* book of the **Faerie Queene**, that very book which has given Keats most pleasure and the first impetus to attempt verse.

The third circumstance, also indirect and external, is the fact that Keats used his simile in a letter to Reynolds, who like Keats was a great admirer of Spenser's poetry. And the last indication that Keats may have

borrowed his allegorical image from Spenser is the chronological nearness of his letter to the composition of his sonnet **To Spenser** (dated in MS. February 5th, 1818). As this sonnet is Keats's acknowledgement of his great indebtedness to Spenser's inspiration I will give it in full:

*Spenser! a jealous honourer of thine,
A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
Did, last eve, ask my promise to refine
Some English, that might strive thine ear to please*

*But, Elfin-poet! 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise, like Phoebus, with a golden quill,
Fire-winged, and make a morning in his mirth.*

*It is impossible to 'scape from toil
O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting:
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming:*

*Be with me in the summer days, and I
Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.*

As evidence for our argument that Keats was indebted to Spenser in the employment of his simile, the sonnet **To Spenser** may prove more convincing only after the definite solution of certain problems connected with its date and with the identity of the "jealous honourer" of Spenser who had asked Keats to write a poem "that might strive to please Spenser's ear". Although the content of the sonnet seems to suggest that it had been written before Keats's **Endymion**, i. e. almost a year before the date on the manuscript copy, which is not in Keats's hand, I believe that whoever wrote the date was right. Keats refused to write a poem in the spirit of Spenser because after finishing **Endymion**, and even during the later months of its composition, he was more and more strongly succumbing to the influence of Shakespeare and Milton, and these two poets led him away from Spenserian themes and diction. It is true that in 1818 and 1819 we still find in his poems and letters unmistakable traces of Spenserian inspiration, which never died down completely during his life, but Keats's private experience and the critical development of public life in England ever more urgently drove him to seek, even in literature, inspiration from such writers whose connection with contemporary actuality was closer and more immediate than Spenser's.

What concerns us here, however, i. e. the validity of the sonnet **To Spenser** as further evidence of Keats's borrowing the allegorical picture of his Mansion with Many Apartments from Spenser's House of Alma, need not be gravely affected, whether further research confirms our hypothesis that the sonnet was written in 1818, and that the friend who asked Keats to write a Spenserian poem was Reynolds (not Leigh Hunt), or not. For these minor problems cannot alter the fact of Keats's inspiration by Spenserian poetry and thought in general, or invalidate the special

instance of Keats's borrowing a simile from Spenser's **Faerie Queene** in particular.

Still, it may be relevant to cite two further bits of evidence for our case from Keats's letters. The first refers to Reynolds as the most probable person among Keats's friends to have asked Keats to write a Spenserian poem. In April 1819 Reynolds wrote a parody on the poem **Peter Bell** which Wordsworth was about to make public. Reynolds's parody actually appeared before the original. Reynolds asked Keats that he, as an intimate of Leigh Hunt, should try to induce Hunt to publish a review of his parody in the **Examiner**. Keats decided to write the review himself, and it appeared in the **Examiner** on April 25th, 1819.

In his review Keats had again recourse to Spenser's **Faerie Queene** for a simile that would express more aptly and graphically one of his ideas. It was the picture of the true and the false Florimell, a theme that Spenser wrote about chiefly in the third, fourth, and fifth books of his epic. The version of Keats's review which he copied in a letter to his brother George in America, runs as follows:

Peter Bell. There have been lately advertised two Books both Peter Bell by name; what stuff the one was made of might be seen by the motto "I am the real Simon Pure". This false Florimel has hurried from the press and obtruded herself into public notice while for aught we know the real one may be still wandering about the woods and mountains. Let us hope she may soon appear and make good her right to the magic girdle. The Pamphleteering Archimage we can perceive has rather a splenetic love than a downright hatred to real Florimels — if indeed they had been so christened — or had even a pretention to play at bob cherry with Barbara Lewthwaite: but he has a fixed aversion to those three rhyming Graces Alice Fell, Susan Gale and Betty Foy [characters from Wordsworth's earlier poems — K. Š.]; and now at length especially to Peter Bell — fit Apollo. It may be seen from one or two Passages in this little skit, that the writer of it has felt the finer parts of Mr. Wordsworth, and perhaps expatiated with his more remote and sublimer muse. This as far as it relates to Peter Bell is unlucky. The more he may love the sad embroidery of the Excursion; the more he will hate the coarse Samplers of Betty Foy and Alice Fell; and as they come from the same hand, the better will be able to imitate that which can be imitated, to wit Peter Bell — as far as can be imagined from the obstinate name. We repeat, it is very unlucky — this real Simon Pure is in parts the very Man — there is a pernicious likeness in the scenery, a "pestilent humour" in the rhymes and an inveterate cadence in some of the Stanzas that must be lamented. If we are one part amused at this we are three parts sorry that an appreciator of Wordsworth should show so much temper at this really provoking name of Peter Bell —!²⁷

We have quoted the review in full — though its better half is not concerned with our theme in this study — to show how Keats was able to see even his favourite authors, for instance Wordsworth, critically and condemn their ideological or poetic lapses from truth and beauty.

Another document showing Keats's unflinching interest in Spenser's poetry occurs in his important letter addressed to Shelley on August 16th, 1820 (several months after Keats had penned his last line of poetry). In the context of the letter the evidence in question contains a most important idea about poetic creation and composition that we have from Keats's own

writing; and it cannot be insignificant that for the expression of this idea Keats borrowed a phrase from his beloved poet, Edmund Spenser; as the original occurs again in that second book of the **Faerie Queene** which had furnished so many inspiring ideas, images and expressions to Keats's own verse, it indirectly corroborates our suggestion as to the Spenserian origin of the Mansion of Many Apartments simile.

The relevant passus in Keats's letter to Shelley is concerned with Shelley's play in verse **The Cenci** and it runs as follows:

I received a copy of the **Cenci**, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of — the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration" — selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and **load every rift of your subject with ore**. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with young wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of **Endymion**, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk...²⁸

The metaphor printed in italics points to its source in the **Faerie Queene** (II. vii. 28). Keats most likely quoted from memory, because Spenser's line reads: "And with rich *metal* loaded every rift." Keats's above quoted speculation about the subservience of poetry to "a purpose which may be the God" or to "poetry and dramatic effect", symbolised by Mammon, naturally led him to Spenser's impressive picture of underground caves and corridors, rich in gold and other precious metals and filled with all sort of treasures, into which the evil god Mammon takes Sir Guyon in order to tempt him with the riches of the earth. But Keats's application of this recollection from his favourite reading shows also very clearly how original and independent he was in his literary borrowings. Except in his earlier poems, and even there, as we have seen in our analysis of **The Imitation of Spenser, Calidore, Sleep and Poetry** etc., but seldom, Keats generally developed in a new way, or gave a personal twist to, the ideas and images derived from Spenser, and at times, just as in this very instance of the Mammon idea, he turned them upside down to make them suit his own purpose. It is obvious, I think, that Spenser's Mammon and Keats's interpretation of mammon are two quite different, perhaps opposite ideas. Spenser's Mammon, though undoubtedly a very convincing poetic character, is the conventional, almost trite personification of the demoralising and destructive power of wealth. In contrast, Keats's Mammon seems to be an entirely original and unconventional symbol of the poet's, or any true artist's, self-concentration or selfishness that is necessary, in Keats's mind, for him in order to achieve integrity and beauty. If we might venture a contemporary interpretation of Keats's advice to Shelley and of his own conception of art, we should formulate his idea as the aesthetic demand of artistic perfection in which, or as a result of which, the artist's masterpiece combines depth of understanding and truthfulness with wealth of imaginative and formal effectiveness. That, while he was again driven to think about Shelley's and his own poetry, Keats felt the necessity to think

at the same time of Spenser and to use a Spenserian image in the formulation of his most private conviction, proves that he regarded the great Elizabethan poet as a model artist deserving to be followed by his romantic descendants.

As we have attempted to show in this study, Keats himself regarded his poetic achievement as in no little measure the outcome of his faithfulness to the example and precept of the great Elizabethan poet. Even when he disagreed with Spenser, we might argue that he did so in Spenser's spirit, because in this disagreement he only exercised the inalienable right of an artist to travel his own way, a right claimed for his own poetry and views by Spenser himself.

SPENSER'S AND KEATS'S USE OF ALLEGORY AND CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

Among the great poets of the past, Spenser, with the possible exception of Shakespeare, came nearest to Keats's ideal of the perfect artist in verse. We are not surprised, therefore, that when Keats conceived the idea of "testing his powers of imagination and chiefly of his invention which is a rare thing"²⁹ in a long narrative poem, the finished product, known to us as *Endymion*, was an *allegorical* romance like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. But the true meaning of Keats's allegorical poem is not so clear as that of Spenser's masterpiece. Partly, perhaps, because Keats has not left any such deliberate interpretation of his *Endymion* as we possess from Spenser concerning the meaning of *The Faerie Queene*. Chiefly, however, because Keats's use of the allegorical method in *Endymion* and elsewhere, is much less thorough and consistent than Spenser's, while, at the same time, it is subtly combined with the romantic type of symbolism and private confession or self-portraiture (similar to that we have found in Keats's first attempt at a romance, *Calidore*).

Keats's unconventional use of the allegorical method is, in my opinion, the principal cause of the failure of Keatsian scholarship to find a satisfactory solution of the problem of the meaning of *Endymion*; though explanations offered are numerous and most ingenious. It may also be the true reason why some critics, Amy Lowell for instance, have denied the very notion of Keats's version of the classical myth as an allegory, though their position seems untenable. For it is quite clear that Keats saw and fully exploited the possibilities of allegorical and symbolic meaning, latent in the myth of the love of the Moon-goddess for the young shepherd-prince *Endymion*, although he did not employ the allegorical method systematically throughout his poem which consists of more than four thousand lines.

But even if we are convinced that *Endymion* is an allegory we do not need to offer a solution of our own concerning its true meaning. All that is necessary for the purpose of our study is to adopt one of the most convincing interpretations as a working hypothesis. This, with certain reservations, will be the closely argued and thoroughly documented explanation advanced by Sidney Colvin, namely that the ancient Greek myth of *Endymion* and *Diana* or *Cynthia* has turned "under Keats's hand

into a parable of the adventures of the poetic soul striving after a full communion with the spirit of essential Beauty".³⁰

Besides its allegorical character, Keats's **Endymion** points to Spenser as one of its main literary sources of inspiration by its *mythological* theme. I believe that the irresistible attraction exercised by Spenser's poetry upon Keats (its various causes have been discussed in the preceding sections of our study) was enhanced when Keats found that Spenser shared his own enthusiastic admiration of the beauty of classical Greek mythology. Of course, the aesthetic appeal of Greek myths was felt by many other Elizabethan poets as well, but Spenser, a humanistic classical scholar and "learned" poet, not only borrowed freely ideas and images from ancient Greek and Roman history, poetry and mythology, after the manner of nearly all Renaissance men of letters, but added to his own poetic treasury also many jewels found in Celtic folklore, medieval romances and the Old and New Testaments. All these heterogeneous elements are skilfully and effectively blended into poetic unity in **The Faerie Queene**; and it is interesting to note that Keats's first poem, the **Imitation of Spenser**, reflects this characteristic feature of Spenser's masterpiece, though not very successfully, in the images of Dido, Lear and Flora, drawn respectively from classical mythology, mythological history and Celtic folklore.

In this section, dealing mainly with Keats's **Endymion**, our critical attention will be focussed only on those elements in Keats's romance that may be better understood and explained when we reveal their Spenserian inspiration. Spenser's influence is reflected, but in a most actively creative manner, in the subject-matter, in the ideological content and in the composition of Keats's poem.

The main *theme*, or the fable of **Endymion**, and its subject-matter, based on classical mythology, are derived from most various literary sources, both ancient and modern. Much of the matter came to Keats straight from scholarly or popular works on classical mythology, such as Lempriere's **Classical Dictionary** (which Keats is said to have learnt by heart while at school), Tooke's or Baldwin's **Pantheon**, etc.; but even more important must have been literary works of art, especially poems written by Homer, Ovid, Vergil, and many other authors. The **Endymion** myth was also a favourite theme of English Renaissance poets who were well known to Keats, particularly Lyly, Drayton, Shakespeare and also Spenser.³¹

We don't know which of these literary sources Keats became acquainted with first. Probably Lempriere's **Classical Dictionary**. But of the poetic versions of the myth, or clear allusions to it in English poetry, the earliest that we may be sure Keats read and admired occurs in Spenser's nuptial hymn **Epithalamion**. The lines that may have sown the seed from which grew the idea of Keats's **Endymion** are near the end of Spenser's ode and run as follows:

*Who is the same, which at my window peeps?
Or whose is that fair face, that shines so bright,
Is it not Cinthia, she that never sleeps,
But walks about high heaven all the night?
O fairest goddess, do thou not envy*

*My love with me to spy:
For thou likewise didst love, though now unthought,
And for a fleece of wool, which privily,
The Latmian shepherd once unto thee brought,
His pleasures with thee wrought.*

(*Epithalamion*, 11. 372—381)

In Spenser's lines Keats might have felt a similar, though not so romantic, attraction to the beauty of the moon as he himself expressed in his adoring invocation of Cynthia in the third book of **Endymion**.

Besides having most probably incited in Keats's mind the idea of writing a mythological romance about Endymion, Spenser undoubtedly contributed many motives and imaginative details to Keats's poem and considerably enriched Keats's own invention. Most of these Spenserian echoes and parallels have been noted in Keatsian literature. I have found only one more resemblance between **Endymion** and **The Faerie Queene** that might be regarded as evidence of Keats's indebtedness to Spenserian imagery: the resemblance between Keats's picture of the underground region, through which his hero wanders in search of Cynthia, and Spenser's picture of the underground kingdom of Mammon, through which Guyon is conducted by this god of avarice. But the resemblance is very general and it would be rash to exclude the possibility of its being a mere coincidence. Nor does inspiration or influence of this type, even if it were proved beyond any doubt, detract from Keats's merit as poet.

More harmful to his ideology and poetry had proved the influence of Spenser's idealistic philosophy derived from Plato and the Christian followers of Plato's school. It seems almost certain that Spenser's **Four Hymns** (1596) in honour of Love and Beauty, Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty have greatly contributed to the conception of Keats's main allegorical theme, the poet's search after ideal beauty and love, as well as influenced his adoption, in **Endymion**, of idealistic view of life. Spenser's synthesis of neo-Platonic and Christian philosophical doctrines, as it appears in the ideological content of his hymns to love and beauty, is in its essence only slightly different from the idealistic conception of human happiness, the supernatural beauty of nature, the spiritual unity of the good and the beautiful, etc. revealed in Keats's **Endymion**. Even here, however, Keats was also affected by the Rousseauist cult of nature, by Wordsworthian idealistic humanism (chiefly through the **Excursion**, a poem which he regarded as one of the greatest artistic achievements of his time), and not least by the example of Shelley's **Alastor** whose affinity with **Endymion** is very close.³²

Keats's nearest approach to the Spenserian cult of love and to the Platonic conception of the indissoluble unity of the good and the beautiful are those lines of his romance where, through his hero, he tries to explain his idea of happiness and traces its conception back to the subjective experience of natural beauty and of love:

*"Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,*

Full alchemized, and free of space. Behold
 The clear religion of heaven! Fold
 A rose-leaf round thy finger's taperness,
 And soothe thy lips; . . .
 Feel we these things? — that moment have we stept
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state
 Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
 Richer entanglements, enthralments far
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
 To the chief intensity: the crown of these
 Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
 Upon the forehead of humanity.
 All its more ponderous and bulky worth
 Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
 A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
 There hangs, by unseen film, an orb'd drop
 Of light, and that is love: its influence,
 Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
 At which we start and fret; till in the end,
 Melting into its radiance, we blend,
 Mingle, and so become a part of it, —
 Nor with ought else can our souls interknit
 So wingedly: . . .
 Just so may love, although 'tis understood
 The mere commingling of passionate breath,
 Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
 What I know not: . . .
 "Now, if this earthly love has power to make
 Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake
 Ambition from their memories, and brim
 Their measure of content; what merest whim,
 Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
 To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim
 A love immortal, an immortal too.
 Look not so wildered; for these things are true,
 And never can be born of atomies
 That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,
 Leaving us fancy-sick . . .

(*Endymion*, I. 11. 777—853, *passim*)

The above quoted address of Endymion to his sister Peona³³ occupies a central position in the ideological structure of **Endymion**. Simultaneously, it is a summing up of Keats's intellectual development in the first half of his poetic career. Keats was fully aware of its subjective significance, as is made clear by his own words in a letter addressed to the publisher of his romance, John Taylor, on January 30th, 1818. In this letter Keats added the five lines at the beginning of the passage quoted above, and then wrote:

You must indulge me by putting this in for setting aside the badness of the other [i. e. the original version], such a preface is necessary to the subject. The whole

thing must I think have appeared to you, who are a consequitive (sic!) Man, as a thing almost of mere words — but I assure you that when I wrote it it was a regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth. My having written that Argument [i. e. the lines on happiness] will perhaps be of the greatest Service to me of any thing I ever did. It set before me at once the gradations of Happiness even like a kind of Pleasure Thermometer — and is my first step towards the chief attempt in the Drama — the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow.³⁴

Not only the letter, but also the lines to which it refers, furnish indisputable testimony to the allegorical character of the central theme of the *Endymion* and to the subjective and strictly personal value of the "Argument", as Keats calls his lines on the essence of happiness. This "Argument", then, is an explicit statement of the theme of *Endymion* as a personal allegory. The idealistic philosophy, which it embodies, is not merely the result of the author's imaginative speculation on the problem of human happiness, but also an unconscious reflection of Keats's study of Spenser's Platonic verse.³⁵

From Keats's letter to Taylor we learn that he himself did not regard his "Argument" as sufficiently clear and convincing. "Consequitive" men, like Taylor, or practical and sensible women, like Endymion's sister Peona, could not be expected to understand, let alone be convinced of the "truth" of Keats's intuitive conception. We don't know what was Taylor's reaction to Keats's letter, but we know from Keats himself that Peona, listening to her brother's rapturous but illogical explanation, "looked wildered" and had to be told about Endymion's love adventure which was intended to make his "sayings seem less obscured".

The trouble for Keats was that in spite of his sincere belief in the possibility of men to achieve perfect happiness through friendship and love, he allowed himself to be influenced by idealistic philosophy so as to see this happiness in a mystic communion with the spiritual essence of the world, a sort of "commingling" of the spirit of man with the divinity. This kind of "truth" can only be declared, not proved. I suggest that Keats's idealistic philosophy was not supported by his experiential knowledge or by his intellectual recognition of the objective existence of the material world. His later development shows that he did not rest content with this kind of "truth" that can be grasped only by intuition and imagination and fails to find verification in confrontation with objective reality. Indeed, even in *Endymion*, as the poem progressed, it looks more as if its allegorical theme were unconsciously being changed into a search for truth which is beauty, rather than for beauty which is truth. In other words, the real theme of Keats's poem is the perilous, but enthusiastic search of the poet after truth, symbolised in Endymion's search for heavenly love and beauty.

We should certainly keep in mind that when writing *Endymion*, and even for a long time after, Keats judged of truth as many artists do, by its beauty. In November, 1818, he wrote to his brother George: "I never can feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its Beauty — and I find myself very young minded even in that perceptive power — which I hope will encrease."³⁶ In this aesthetic approach to reality lurked the danger of subjective idealism which was only enhanced by Keats's admira-

tion for Spenser, Wordsworth and other poets whose philosophy of life was imbued with ancient and Christian spiritualistic doctrines. On the other hand, we cannot forget that the hero of his mythological romance found the heavenly mistress he had been looking for in vain in the bowels of the earth and under the sea, on the surface of the earth, in the shape of a mortal woman, the Indian Maiden. Thus the ideal was revealed to him in the real. And this important evidence of Keats's instinctive materialism cannot be explained away even by the conventional conclusion of the romance, in which the goddess and the woman are shown to be one, the real is disclosed as the ideal. This end was prescribed to Keats by his fable in which the mortal Endymion is immortalised by the love of a goddess. But the Indian Maiden was Keats's original addition to the classical myth, and implies his criticism of its religiously mystical content.

Another important feature of Keats's treatment of his mythological, and also personally allegorical, theme is the skill and daring with which he succeeded in transcending the narrow limits of the simple fable and the merely private scope of its personal allegory. In Keats's conception and presentation Endymion is neither a mere mythological character, nor a convenient figure symbolising Keats's own individual search and desire for private happiness. He becomes the symbolic type of all human beings longing for beauty and truth and finding real happiness in friendship and mutual love. There is no doubt that **Endymion**, as it stands, is a deeply humanistic poem.

Taking into consideration all the different circumstances that led Keats to the conception of his **Endymion**, as well as all the different sources of inspiration, personal, social, literary, etc. that more or less conspicuously influenced and modified his artistic realisation of this conception, we arrive at the following conclusion concerning the origin and meaning of the poem. In the allegorical conception of his mythological romance Keats started from his personal human and artistic experiences, dreams and desires. These he endowed with a wider, universal significance by generalising them. And finally he gave these generalised ideas and ambitions concrete individual expression in poetic characters and events, which are partly his own creations, partly subtly modified derivations from Greek mythology, from which he borrowed either directly or indirectly, through the medium of Spenser, Drayton, Lyly, Browne and other writers who have left us versions of the Endymion myth in their own works.

The choice of the Endymion myth for a concrete poetic representation of Keats's own experiences, emotions, speculations and ideals was determined by his well-known enthusiasm for classical mythology. But a no less decisive moment must have been his knowledge of the time-honoured literary tradition in whose spirit both medieval and Renaissance authors used classical mythology in order to illustrate their own philosophical, religious, political and aesthetic views. In their practice, however, they often distorted the original meaning of classical myths, either intentionally or because they lacked the necessary erudition. Most frequently they tried to camouflage the paganism or naturalism of these myths by adapting them to suit their own Christian philosophy.

Thus, for instance, Sandys's translation of Ovid's **Metamorphoses**, in

the edition of 1632, contains the translator's "commentary", whose chief purpose is to explain Ovid's fables as allegories from the point of view of Christian theology, ethics, history and natural science; in his commentary Sandys quotes as authorities for his views famous philosophers from Plato to Francis Bacon. This anti-historical attitude to classical mythology was typical for Renaissance literature. [I cite George Sandys only because Keats knew his translation and commentary, and could find there much of the raw material for his poems, as has been demonstrated by Ernest de Selincourt.]³⁷

The Endymion myth was eminently suitable for the kind of allegorical treatment it has received from Keats and some of Keats's alleged predecessors. The shepherd Endymion's love for the Moon — one of the loveliest phenomena of nature and, on that account, the Romantics' favourite symbol of ideal beauty — certainly had had an allegorical meaning even in ancient times. Besides, as he confesses in **Endymion**, Keats had always, since he was a boy, been powerfully moved by the mysterious beauty of the moon. As the central theme of a full-length epic poem, however, the fable had many disadvantages. It lacked the epic wealth of character and event and had no dramatic plot worth mentioning. Keats attempted to overcome these inherent deficiencies by inventing a number of minor characters and romantic incidents, as well as by borrowing freely from other classical myths or various literary sources. Many of these additions had no connection with the original Greek fable of Endymion and the moon-goddess. In this way he succeeded at last in completing his self-imposed task, though not quite to his artistic satisfaction, as may be seen from the following extract from his preface to the poem:

"Knowing within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public. What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good; it will not — the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away; a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live... I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness; for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell."

There is no need to add anything to Keats's own judgment of his mythological romance, except that it shows a capacity of just self-criticism that we seldom come across even in great artists.

But now we have to return to our examination of Spenserian inspiration in Keats's poem. So far we have been looking for it mainly in the theme and in the ideological content. But it may be revealed also in the structure and composition. It seems to us that Spenser's poetic example had determined Keats's division of **Endymion** into *four* books, a rather unusual number for epic poems, unless we remember that the most influential literary source of the ideological content of Keats's poem, namely Spenser's hymns to love and beauty, also consist of *four* parts: **An Hymn in honour of Love, An Hymn in honour of Beauty, An Hymn in**

honour of Heavenly Love, and An Hymn in honour of Heavenly Beauty. The number must have impressed itself upon Keats's mind the more deeply because the hymns were published in one volume entitled **Four Hymns**. [Other poetic compositions that might have suggested to Keats the number of his Books, such as Milton's **Paradise Regained** (in which the number of books corresponds to the number of the four Gospels of the New Testament), or Byron's **Childe Harold's Pilgrimage**, may be dismissed from our consideration because their themes are not so close to **Endymion** as the **Four Hymns** of Spenser.]³⁸

The division into four, almost equally long parts was by no means simply a matter of formal symmetry. The compositional structure of Keats's mythological romance has both the firm backbone of its main line of thematic development and elastic joints that bind the four limbs to this backbone. Each book, moreover, may be taken to represent one of the four successive stages of the process of Keats's speculative thought. The course of the overt, mythological story and the current of the hidden allegorical meaning, however, are not systematically parallel and many details serve the purpose of only one of these two plans without significant reference to the other. This, no doubt, makes the poem more difficult to understand and constitutes one of its gravest aesthetic defects. That may have been in Keats's mind when he wrote in the **Preface** that the foundations of **Endymion** "are too sandy".

For the main outline of his structural plan Keats could have received many useful hints from Spenser's work. The notion, for instance, of representing the development of the mythological theme as well as the evolution of the ideological content by means of a *pilgrimage in quest of an ideal goal*, may well have been suggested to the author by the **Faerie Queene**, which uses this allegorical device systematically. Though the idea was a very old convention in imaginative literature (Keats had come across it first in Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** and in Vergil's **Aeneid** while he was frequenting the Enfield grammar school, and soon after he met with the story in form of the hero's pilgrimage or travels in such favourite books of his as Spenser's **Faerie Queene**, Homer's **Odyssey**, Byron's **Childe Harold's Pilgrimage**, Fielding's **Tom Jones** or **Joseph Andrews**, Shelley's **Alastor**, etc.), the **Faerie Queene** may have been the one particular model which he followed because it obviously was Keats's inspiration in many other respects when planning and composing **Endymion**.

Spenserian inspiration and example is indicated also by the already mentioned correspondence between the four books of **Endymion** and Spenser's **Four Hymns** in honour of Love and Beauty. This correspondence is much closer than the mere number of Keats's books and Spenser's hymns. A detailed analysis, which cannot be gone into here for want of space, reveals a correspondence in theme and idea between each single hymn of Spenser's and each of the four parts of **Endymion**. Keats's first book, for instance, is a panegyric on the beauty of the earth and of simple human life, just like Spenser's **Hymn in honour of Beauty**. Its theme is poetically stated in the introductory lines, beginning with the well-known and much quoted: "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." (The introductory passages to each of his four books may also have been introduced on the model of similar poetic introductions to each of the six books

in Spenser's **Faerie Queene**. As in Spenser, they serve the double purpose of indicating the theme of the book they introduce, and of allowing the author to express his own opinions on the subject of the book.)

The second book of **Endymion** corresponds to Spenser's **Hymn in honour of Love**. Again the theme is stated and Keats's own view of love is voiced in the opening lines in honour of the "sovereign power of love" in the history of not only individual men and women, but of all mankind. The idea of Keats, that love is more important as a factor in the progress of human society towards happiness than hatred leading to cruel wars and destruction, an idea, by the way, certainly inspired by the poet's experience of Napoleonic wars and his hatred of militarism, could have found confirmation and encouragement in the following stanza of Spenser:

*Debateful strife, and cruel enmity,
The famous name of Knighthood foully shend;
But lovely peace, and gentle amity,
And in Amours the passing hours to spend,
The mighty martial hands do most commend:
Of love they ever greater glory bore
Than of their arms: Mars is Cupido's friend,
And is for Venus' loves renowned more
Than all his wars and spoils, the which he did of yore.*
(F. Q., II. vi. 35)

The third and fourth books of **Endymion** should correspond to Spenser's **Hymns in honour of Heavenly Beauty and Love**, respectively. But we find that Keats abandons his plan of progress, if he had ever conceived it in the manner indicated by our comparison of his first two books with Spenser's **Hymns in honour of Beauty and Love**; instead, he combines the two themes of heavenly love and beauty into one theme in which he sings their essential unity. To this theme of the unity of love and beauty, both terrestrial and celestial, he devotes the last two books of his epic. Therefore we find that the opening lines of the third book do not indicate the theme of the book. They still express the author's personal view, this time concerning his hatred of political reaction in England, but with the ideological and thematic plan of **Endymion** their connection is rather loose, though not inorganic or aesthetically disturbing. I would consider these lines denouncing those "who lord it o'er their fellow-men with most prevailing tinsel" as virtually a more organic part of **Endymion** than the passage that serves as introduction to the fourth book.

The introductory lines of the last book of **Endymion** are almost exclusively devoted to Keats's personal sphere of interest as poet, and more specifically as an English poet. With the allegorical and mythological theme of the fourth book, indeed, of the whole poem, they are only formally, and illogically, connected through the two lines "Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part from my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!" (**Endymion**, IV. 11. 30-31.)

In his introduction to the fourth book Keats pays homage to English poetry and invokes the "muse of his native land" to help him overcome his despondency:

*Great Muse, thou know'st what prison,
Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets,
Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn
Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
And could not pray: — nor can I now — so on
I move to the end in lowliness of heart.*

(*Endymion*, IV. 11. 20—29)

I wonder whether we might not divine the name of Spenser among all those great English poets of the past, on whom Keats thinks though he does not name them, when he tries to draw fresh strength and inspiration for his own poetry? Comparing his own achievement with theirs — at the time when he was writing *Endymion* — he obviously could not but feel rather depressed. But he did not lose hope, and his determination to continue in his strife as man and poet was rewarded when he accomplished “verses fit to live” in his *Odes*, his *Eve of St Agnes*, *Lamia*, *Isabella*, *Hyperion* and other great poems of his artistic maturity.

* * *

Spenserian inspiration, as the preceding investigation has tried to show, was at its strongest in Keats's earlier poetry (1814—1817) though, as has been pointed out, it did not cease to manifest itself even in Keats's latest productions, such as *The Cap and Bells*, the *Odes*, or the *Fall of Hyperion*. In marshalling the evidence of Keats's intellectual and artistic indebtedness to his beloved Elizabethan master no attempt has been made to exhaust the material at our disposal. Yet we presume to have ascertained both the extent and the specific character of the Spenser-Keats relation, especially in the first phase of Keats's poetic career, while some of the clearer manifestations of Spenserian influence in his mature period (1818—1820) have also been duly noted, when necessary. Those later instances, both from poems and letters, however, add little of importance to our problem and cannot alter the conclusions arrived at which we shall now try to recapitulate in a brief summary.

What strikes us most strongly about the effect of Spenser's poetry on Keats's thought and art is the capacity of Keats to retain, and express, his own personality, intellectual, temperamental and artistic, from the first to the last poem that might be argued to have been, however slightly, inspired by Spenser. Even in his first attempt at poetry, *Imitation of Spenser*, Keats produced a comparatively original piece of verse, rather than a mere copy of his master's versification, style and diction. And the later “imitations” of Spenserian romances, from *Calidore* to *Endymion* to the *Cap and Bells*, all prove that Spenser was to Keats an example to emulate, rather than to imitate. Keats showed least resistance to those aspects of Spenser's poetry and thought that coincided with his own natural bent and experience: such as Spenser's love and masterful expression of the beauty of nature and the visible world in general; or Spenser's exquisite

craftsmanship; or some of Spenser's aesthetic views. But Keats's attitude to Spenser's reactionary political or obscurantist religious ideology remained firmly hostile. Spenser's influence, in short, was able to strengthen and confirm Keats's own tendencies, but failed to deflect him from the road he regarded as right, at least in the long run.

In conclusion, I would like to say that one of the reasons why the preceding attempt at a re-examination and re-valuation of the problem of Spenserian inspiration in Keats's poetry has been undertaken, was the conviction that, if successful, it might be a small but valuable contribution towards solving the larger problem of literary tradition and mutual influence. For the definite and fully satisfactory solution of that complex question, of course, many more studies of a similar detailed and concrete investigation would have to be accomplished beforehand, and not only studies of the inspiration of an earlier artist upon a later one of the same cultural tradition and milieu, as is the case of Spenser and Keats, but also of the influence of one artist upon another in the same age and society.

NOTES

- ¹ The author of the present study [which is a revised English version of the chapter on Spenser and Keats originally published in Czech in his monograph called **Básnické dílo Johna Keatse** (The Poetry of John Keats), published in 1958 in Prague as No. 51 of the Opera Universitatis Brunensis, Facultas Philosophica, has listed the authors and books, as well as the artists and composers etc., whose works Keats may be with practical certainty supposed to have known on pp. 178—181 of the book. But he cannot claim that his list is exhaustive.
- ² Finney, Claude Lee: **The Evolution of Keats's Poetry**, Harvard U. P. 1936, pp. 26—27.
- ³ Hewlett, Dorothy: **A Life of John Keats**. London 1949, p. 27.
- ⁴ According to Richard Woodhouse, an ardent collector of Keats's MSS., one of the earliest poems written by Keats was a sonnet on the moon, which Keats is said to have given to C. C. Clarke. Cf. **The Keats Circle**, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins. Harvard U. P. 1948, vol. I, p. 274.
- ⁵ **The Keats Circle**, vol. II, p. 55.
- ⁶ **Ib.** p. 168.
- ⁷ Cf. **Finney**, op. cit. sub. (2) or Sir Sidney Colvin: **John Keats**, London 1920.
- ⁸ **Finney**, op. cit. sub. (2), p. 28.
- ⁹ Lowell, Amy: **John Keats**. 2 vols. London 1925. Vol. I. p. 53.
- ¹⁰ See note (2).
- ¹¹ **Ib.** pp. 29—33.
- ¹² **Ibidem.**
- ¹³ **Ib.** p. 33.
- ¹⁴ Hazlitt, William: **Lectures on the English Poets**. Oxford U. P. 1933, p. 52.
- ¹⁵ **Ib.** pp. 56—57.
- ¹⁶ Judson, Alexander C.: **The Life of Edmund Spenser**. The John Hopkins U. P. 1945, p. 106.
- ¹⁷ Štěpánfk, Karel: **The Reflection of Social Reality in Keats's Poems and Letters. Brno Studies in English. Volume I**. Opera Universitatis Brunensis, Facultas Philosophica, No. 55. Praha 1959, pp. 69—102, particularly pp. 93—94, illustrating Keats's anticlerical and enlightened views with regard to religious superstition and the obscurantism of the Protestant Churches.
- ¹⁸ See **Finney**, op. cit. sub. (2), pp. 611 ff.
- ¹⁹ Garrod, H. W.: **Keats**. Oxford 1926, pp. 87—97.
- ²⁰ **The Letters of John Keats**. Edited by Maurice Buxton Forman, 3rd Edition. London 1948, p. 517.
- ²¹ Cited by **Colvin**. Op. cit. sub. (7), p. 31.
- ²² Cf. op. cit. sub. (9), pp. 203 and 545—574.
- ²³ **Bennett, H. S.: Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century**. Oxford 1948, pp. 133—134.

- ²⁴ Chudoba, František: **Básníci, věšci a bojovníci** (Poets, Seers, and Fighters), Praha 1942. (Cf. his essay on Keats in this volume.)
- ²⁵ Op. cit. sub (20), p. 108.
- ²⁶ **Ib.** pp. 143—144.
- ²⁷ **Ib.** p. 328.
- ²⁸ **Ib.** p. 507.
- ²⁹ **The Letters of John Keats.** Edited by Maurice Buxton Forman. Oxford U. P. 1931. Vol. I. p. 55.
- ³⁰ Colvin, op. cit. sub (7), p. 167.
- ³¹ Cf. Edward le Comte: **Endymion in England**, New York, 1944.
- ³² Colvin, op. cit. sub. (7), pp. 233 ff.
- ³³ Peona, the name of Endymion's sister, was according to Colvin suggested to Keats by Spenser's Peaena in **The Faerie Queene**. This borrowing strengthens our argument in favour of Spenser's ideological influence in **Endymion**. In those cases, moreover, when Keats identifies himself with his hero, as he does in the address of Endymion to Peona on the subject of happiness, we may perhaps imply that he identifies Endymion's sister Peona with his own sister Fanny. Cf. also **Štěpaník**, op. cit. sub (1), p. 102.
- ³⁴ Op. cit. sub (29), vol. I, p. 98.
- ³⁵ Keats almost certainly knew no works of Plato or his later disciples from his own reading. In all his poems he only twice mentions Plato's name, and that but cursorily.
- ³⁶ Op. cit. sub (29), vol. I, p. 281.
- ³⁷ Cf. **The Poems of John Keats.** Edited by Ernest de Selincourt. London, 1907.
- ³⁸ Some other reasons for Keats's division of **Endymion** into four books have been submitted by Claude L. Finney [op. cit. sub (2) p. 299] and Robert Bridges in **A critical Introduction to Keats**, London 1929, pp. 88 ff. Finney argues that Keats "outlined four stages or gradations through which Endymion must pass before he wins the happiness of "fellowship with essence" — first, appreciation of the beauty of nature, "the clear religion of heaven"; second, appreciation of the beauty of art; third, friendship; and fourth, love. He developed these four stages in the four books of **Endymion**, devoting a book to each stage." It may be admitted as correct that Keats in his lines on happiness (in **Endymion**) actually outlines the above mentioned four stages to be passed through in order to win happiness, but I confess I cannot see that he "devoted a book to each stage".
- Bridges argues quite differently. In his opinion, "The general scheme of the poem is broad and simple. The four books, following the common formula of mystic initiation 'by the terrors of Fire, of Water and Air' . . . , correspond with the four elements — I. Earth; II. Fire . . . ; III. Under sea — Water; IV. Air; and these typify respectively — I. Natural beauty; II. The mysteries of earth; III. The secrets of death; IV. Spiritual freedom and satisfaction". I cannot see my way to accept Bridges's ingenious scheme either. It seems too systematic for Keats's usual procedure in composition.

OTÁZKA SPENSEROVSKÉ INSPIRACE V POESII JOHNA KEATSE

Vycházejí z poznatku, že vynikající postavení básnické tvorby Johna Keatse v dějinách anglické i světové literatury nebylo jen důsledkem jeho nadání a pilné práce, ale i vědomého studia domácích i cizích klasiků, zabývá se autor této studie otázkou rozsahu a charakteru působení literární tradice na Keatsovu básnickou praxi i uměleckou teorii, a to na průzkumu specifického vztahu mezi Keatsem a alžbětinským básníkem Edmundem Spenserem, který byl zvolen jednak proto, že ze všech známých literárních vlivů na Keatsovu tvorbu byl Spenserův vliv časově první a nejtrvalejší, jednak proto, že nebyl dosud v odborné literatuře dostatečně prošetřen a zhodnocen.

Autor se také domnívá, že průzkum a co nejpřesnější osvětlení tohoto důležitějšího problému může přispět i k zásadnímu řešení otázky umělecké tradice a tzv. literárních vlivů vůbec, bude-li ovšem doplněn co největším počtem podobných konkrétních studií vzájemných vztahů mezi spisovateli a umělci nejen různých dob, ale i různých národností.

Vlastní studie zkoumá podrobně především Keatsovu závislost na Spenserovi v raném období (1814—1817), zahrnujícím básně od **Napodobení Spensera**, prvních známých Keatsových veršů, až po vydání mythologického eposu **Endymion** (1818). Ohlasy Spenserovy tvorby ve vrcholném období Keatsovy umělecké dráhy (1818—1820) jsou zkoumány jen tam, kde je to pro pochopení otázky nutné. V tomto období však Spenserovo působení na Keatse zřetelně ochablo, třebaž nikdy neutuchlo nadobro, jak svědčí poslední nedokončená Keatsova skladba **Čapka s rolníčkami** a spenserovské ohlasy v četných menších básních i v Keatsových soukromých dopisech.

V rozvržení látky je zachováván v zásadě chronologický postup. První ze čtyř kapitol studie se zabývá detailním srovnáním Keatsovy prvotiny **Napodobení Spensera**, jejíž datum se klade na počátek r. 1814, se Spenserovou **Královnou víl**, která podnítila Keatse k básnické tvorbě vlastní. Nejdůležitější zjištění ze srovnání vyplývající je to, že Keats ani v svém debutu nebyl přes veškeré nadšení pro Spensera jako slovesného umělce nekritickým obdivovatelem a otrokem napodobovatelem. Jako téměř všechny skladby Keatsovy i tato první báseň je odrazem básníkovy vlastní zkušenosti soukromé i společenské, nejen kopií cizího vzoru.

K podobnému závěru o Keatsově úsilí po pravdivém zobrazení života, ovšem nedokonalém pro nedostatky zkušenosti a uměleckého mistrovství, dochází i zkoumáním Keatsových raných pokusů o romantický spenserovský epos, o nichž pojednává **druhá kapitola** studie. Ve zlomku **Calidore** např. se Keatsova autostylizační snaha v hrdinově povahokresbě uplatnila na úkor psychologické pravdivosti této postavy, kterou si vypůjčil z **Královnou víl**. Poněvadž však Keats byl básník vysloveně lyrický a za svého krátkého života nemohl nabýt dostatečně bohatých životních zkušeností, zůstaly jeho pokusy o skladby epické a dramata zlomky nebo, jako **Endymion** a tragédie **Otto Veliký**, umělecky neuspokojily ani svého tvůrce.

Třetí kapitola dokládá a zdůvodňuje možnost Spenserova působení ideového, a to především v oblasti estetické a básnické teorie, na Keatsův vlastní umělecký názor, který byl úzce spjat s jeho rozporným názorem filosofickým. Hlavní doklady tu poskytl Keatsova důležitá báseň **Spánek a poesie**, která vznikla na podzim r. 1816 a odráží poměrně věrně názory Spenserovy vyjádřené např. v pastýřských eklogách **Shepherd's Calendar**. Mimořádně se zjišťuje, že Keats skrze Spensera poznal i Chaucerovu (respektive Chaucerovi mylně připisovanou) báseň **Květ a list** a reagoval na ni jasně ve **Spánku a poesii**.

Čtvrtá kapitola srovnává Spenserovo a Keatsovo použití alegorické metody a jejich shodný vztah ke klasické mythologii, a to na Keatsově nejvýznamnější starší skladbě **Endymion**. Byl zjištěn Spenserův vliv na vznik skladby, na její alegorický a mythologický charakter, na četné obrazy a slovní výrazy a na ideologický obsah i kompoziční plán této náročné, ale ne zcela zdařilé romantické básně. Ve všech zkoumaných básních je zřejmá Keatsova vědomá snaha o umělecké sepětí životní pravdivosti s poetickou výrazovou bohatostí, snaha, abychom užili jeho slov, po jednotě pravdy a krásy. I v tom mu byl příkladem, který po svém následoval, Edmund Spenser.

ПРОБЛЕМА ВЛИЯНИЯ СПЕНСЕРА НА ПОЭЗИЮ
ДЖОНА КИТСА

Исходя из положения, что выдающееся место поэтического творчества Джона Китса в истории английской и мировой литературы не было лишь результатом его таланта и усердной работы, но и сознательного изучения английских и иностранных классиков, автор этой статьи занимается проблемой объёма и характера воздействия литературной традиции на поэтическую практику и художественную теорию Китса, изучением специфических отношений между Китсом и ренессансным поэтом Эдмундом Спенсером, который был выбран не только потому, что из всех известных литературных влияний на творчество Китса влияние Спенсера было первоначально и более продолжительно, но и потому, что до сих пор этот вопрос не был достаточно исследован и оценен в специальной литературе.

Автор полагает, что изучение и более точное освещение этой узкой проблемы может помочь и в принципиальном решении проблемы художественной традиции и так называемого литературного влияния вообще, если это исследование будет дополнено как можно большим количеством подобных конкретных работ о взаимоотношениях между писателями и художниками не только разных эпох, но и разных народов.

Данная работа, прежде всего, занимается изучением зависимости Китса от Спенсера в ранний период (1814—1817), включающий стихотворение от „Подражания Спенсеру“, первых известных стихов Китса и до издания мифологической поэмы „Эндимион“ (1818). Отголоски творчества Спенсера в кульминационный период художественного творчества Китса (1818—1820) исследованы только там, где это необходимо для понимания проблемы. Но в этот период влияние Спенсера на Китса значительно ослаблено, хотя никогда полностью не исчезло, о чём свидетельствует неоконченное произведение Китса „Колпак и бубенцы“ и отголоски Спенсера в большом количестве меньших стихотворений и в личной переписке Китса.

В распределении материала соблюдается хронологический принцип. Первая из четырёх глав работы занимается подробным сравнением первого произведения Китса „Подражание Спенсеру“, которое относится к началу 1814 года, с „Королевой Фей“ Спенсера, которая вдохновила Китса к собственно поэтическому творчеству. Наиважнейшим открытием, вытекающим из сравнения, является то, что Китс и в своём первом выступлении восторгался Спенсером, как художником слова, но никогда не был не критическим поклонником и рабским подражателем. Как почти все произведения Китса, и это первое стихотворение является отражением собственного личного и социального опыта поэта, а не только копией чужих образов.

К данному выводу о стремлении Китса к правдивому изображению жизни, но несовершенному из-за недостаточного опыта и художественного мастерства, автор приходит при исследовании ранних опытов Китса написать романтическое произведение в духе Спенсера; это и является предметом второй части работы. Во фрагменте поэмы „Калидор“, например, мы видим авто-стилистическое стремление в изображении героя, которое сделано за счёт психологической правдивости Калидора, которого он взял из „Королевы фей“. Так как Китс был поэтом полностью лирическим и в течение своей слишком короткой жизни не мог освоить достаточно богатый опыт, остались его опыты эпических сочинений и драм или только во фрагментах, или были окончены, как например „Эндимион“ и трагедия „Отто Великий“, но с художественной точки зрения не удовлетворяли и самого творца.

Третья глава подтверждает и подчёркивает возможность идейного воздействия Спенсера, особенно на эстетические и литературоведческие теории Китса, которые тесно связаны с его противоречивыми философскими взглядами. Важнейшим свидетельством этого воздействия является стихотворение Китса „Сон и поэзия“, созданное осенью 1816 года и выражавшее достаточно верно взгляды Спенсера, содержащиеся в эклогах „Пастушеский календарь“. При этом автор статьи обнаружил, что Китс посредством Спенсера познакомился также со стихотворением Чосера „Цветок и лист“ и ясно откликнулся на него в стихотворении „Сон и поэзия“.

Последняя, четвёртая глава сравнивает употребление иносказательного метода у Китса и Спенсера и их сходное отношение к классической мифологии, особенно в замечательной поэме Китса „Эндимион“. Было обнаружено воздействие Спенсера на концепцию поэмы, на её иносказательный и мифологический характер, на многие образы и языковые выра-

жения и на идейное содержание и план композиции этой претенциозной, но недостаточно совершенной романтической поэмы.

Во всех исследованных стихотворениях видно ясное стремление Китса художественно соединить жизненную правдивость с поэтическим выразительным богатством, стремление, по его словам, соединить правду и красоту. Также в этом Эдмунд Спенсер служил ему примером, за которым он своеобразно следовал.

Перевод: Доровский и Ондражейова