1992

Expressions of androgyny in Shakespeare and Keats

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.r45y-x7qp>
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San Jose State University, 1992

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Expressions of Androgyny in Shakespeare and Keats

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the English Department
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Lydia Rosen

May, 1992

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Abstract

Expressions of Androgyny in Shakespeare and Keats

by Lydia Rosen

The aim in this thesis is to find evidence for Virginia Woolf's statement, in "A Room of One's Own," that Shakespeare and Keats express an androgynous nature in their works. The thesis explores opposite-sex disguise in three of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, as well as selected poems and letters of John Keats to discover androgynous expression.

Marilyn French's delineation of the "gender principles," a compilation of qualities traditionally associated with each of the genders, serves as a reference for identifying androgynous expression. Nancy Bazin's catalogue of attributes Virginia Woolf associated with each of the genders provides additional reference.

As a background for the exploration, the thesis recounts the historical roots of the androgynous ideal, revealing an historical impulse to reconcile the polarized perceptions of reality French calls the "gender principles."

With these principles as a basis for determination and a range of critics for substantiation, the evidence supports Woolf's claims; in their respective tendencies to illustrate, confront, and when possible, reconcile polarities traditionally associated with the two genders, both Shakespeare and Keats express an androgynous vision in the works selected for this study.

EXPRESSIONS OF ANDROGYNY IN SHAKESPEARE AND KEATS

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Acknowledgments

For their contributions to the writing of this thesis I wish to thank:

Professor Hans Guth, of the English Department of San Jose State University, for introducing me to the erudition of Marilyn French;

Professor Gabriele Rico, of the English Department of San Jose State University, for her guidance and suggestions, especially her suggestion that I look at Camille Paglia's new book, Sexual Personae, which I found a wonderfully refreshing back-up for my thesis;

My friend Cal Veargason, for her limitless patience when I was awash with frustrations. Her comprehension of the academic / emotional turmoil of thesis writing, and her down-to-earth advice were invaluable.

My friend, Blanche Rosen (who just happens to be my mother-in-law), for her consolation and encouragement when things were not going well, and her delight when it all turned out;

My husband, Hal Rosen, whose understanding and translation of the academic world were also invaluable to me. My gratitude for Hal's steadfast belief in me and willingness to support me in all of my pursuits is without measure.

Chapter One

Idea Born of Image

Virginia Woolf, in her essay, A Room of One's Own, extends an invitation to explore an idea that might be termed simply "expressions of androgyny in writing." It is an idea born, in characteristic Woolf fashion, from her leap of association between the images of a man, a woman, and a taxi. with Coleridge's declaration that "a great mind must be androgynous" (The Table Talk 415). The idea Woolf submits for contemplation is

a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine.... But it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by woman-manly, by pausing and looking at a book or two (102).

Woolf's long essay is based on two papers she read to the Arts Society at Newnham and the Odtas at Girton in 1928 on the subject of Women and Fiction. In the manner of fiction, Woolf creates a persona, an amalgam of women writers of the past who serves as the "I" in the narrative. The persona leads the reader on a circuitous yet ultimately pointed journey that is a singular performance of literary stream-of-consciousness writing. The subjects she approaches

obliquely on this meandering journey are of special concern to young women who aspire to write. The subjects range from what a woman of her time needed in order to write fiction ("five hundred a year and a room of her own") (Woolf 4), to the inequalities of education then confronting women, to a tantalizingly incomplete characterization of an androgynous mind (and by extension, expressions of androgyny in writing). The last idea takes form in a particularly compelling fashion. It illustrates in cross-section how the mind can experience an image, and from the ensuing associations create an idea that fully engages both the imagination and the intellect. The emergence of idea from image has great significance both in Woolf's essay and at a later point in this thesis. Here, it is of special note because Woolf's conjectures provided the seeds from which the focus for this thesis was conceived.

In the essay, the idea blooms at a moment when the narrator arrives at a juncture that has a kind of held-breath, time-out-of-time quality about it. The persona, in a mood of relaxed concentration, is looking out of an uncurtained window at a busy London morning; she notes the various figures in the scene, including "a distinguished gentleman" and "a bustling lady" who almost collide but who seem "separate, self-absorbed, on business of their own" (100). It is then that the strange vacuum intervenes. And across this vacuum walk, diagonally, a young woman and a

young man who converge at a taxicab, which takes them in and glides away. The image coalesces for Woolf's persona some thought fragments she has been ruminating on throughout the course of the essay. The moment was:

like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked. It seemed to point to a river, which flowed past, invisibly, round the corner, down the street, and took people and eddied them along... (100).

The force this moment signals for Woolf's persona is the idea that just as "Oxbridge," by its masculine domination of academics, is repressive by not allowing the female presence, so too the mind, male, or female, becomes repressive when it is hampered in exploring opposing (or complementary) perspectives or states of mind:

But some of these states of mind seem, even if adopted spontaneously, to be less comfortable than others. In order to keep oneself continuing in them one is unconsciously holding something back, and gradually the repression becomes an effort. But there must be some state of mind in which one could continue without effort because nothing is required to be held back (101).

These ruminations then lead her to contemplate the ideal unity or reconciliation between masculine and feminine perspectives reflected in the earlier quote recalling Coleridge's assertion "a great mind must be androgynous."

These conjectures present a certain provocative challenge. What if one were to accept the challenge by adopting Woolf's speculations as an embarkation point and assume the exploration she might have initiated had she followed through with her own engaging suggestion of

"pausing and looking at a book or two"? The quest seemed a particularly intriguing one; thus the idea of exploring androgyny in selected works of literature as the focus for a thesis was conceived. The goal of this study is to explore the means by which certain writers manifest an androgynous perspective. (It is important to emphasize here the taxicab image, as Joanne Blum points out in Transcending Gender, is "an image of the mind, the 'creative mind' (as Woolf herself clarifies) and is by no means intended as a model for the social interaction of men and women" (25).

Although the topic was intriguing, the choice of writers to examine appeared formidable. Woolf's conjectures on Coleridge's claim "a great mind must be androgynous...", however, suggested a starting point:

He meant, perhaps, that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent, and undivided. In fact, one goes back to Shakespeare's mind as the type of the androgynous, of the man-womanly mind... (103).

Woolf's reference to the nature of Shakespeare's mind suggested a study of Shakespeare's works would yield much for this investigation. In addition to indicating Shakespeare, Woolf suggests a range of writers, including Chaucer, Cowper, Lamb, Emily Bronte, Coleridge, and Keats, whom she considers "the type of the androgynous." However, it seemed wise to limit the writers examined to Shakespeare and Keats, thus providing a perspective from both the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

With this final choice, the scope of the paper has become a study of androgynous expression in three of Shakespeare's romantic comedies and in selected poems and letters of Keats. The intention is to retain as impetus Virginia Woolf's claims about the writers under consideration; her own perspective will not be overlooked and will play throughout the paper. Historical background and modern criticism will provide support for her claims.

Before beginning an exploration of the ways Shakespeare and Keats manifest an androgynous nature or perspective in their works, identifying some historical sign posts along the way will lend clarity to the quest.

Chapter Two

Historical Roots of the Androgynous Ideal

The concept of androgyny (andros: man; gyne: woman) is a deceptively simple bridging of qualities historically considered "masculine" and "feminine." The first step in exploring expressions of androgyny in the works of Shakespeare and Keats is to determine what relationship the three terms "masculine," "feminine," and "androgynous" can possibly bear to the characterization of literature.

Marilyn French, in her book, Shakespeare's Division of Experience, describes two different perceptions of human experience she calls "the gender principles" she claims have operated since time immemorial, and which she finds clearly delineated throughout literature (21). French envisions these gender principles, which are "not necessarily identical to gender" (21), as existing on a gamut whose opposite poles are masculine and feminine. At the masculine extreme is the ability to kill; on the feminine extreme is the ability to give birth. The feminine principle is associated with nature and with "impulses toward acceptance of simple continuation, of present pleasure, of surrender to mortality" (22). More complexly, a split exists in the feminine principle reflecting a duality in nature at once benevolent and destructive. The aspect of nature seen as benevolent and therefore "nutritive, regenerating, supportive" (22),

coincides with what French calls the "inlaw aspect" (23). The aspect coinciding with the destructive forces of nature and "associated with darkness, chaos, flesh, the sinister, magic and above all, sexuality" is the "outlaw aspect" of the feminine principle (23). Seen in its entirety, the feminine principle is "circular, atemporal, and accepting " and "associated with the cycles of nature, eternal recurrence, with eternity and the present moment" (23). Further, the feminine principle "exalts the community above the individual, feeling over action, sensation over thought" (24). In contrast, the masculine principle:

is associated with prowess and ownership, with physical courage, assertiveness, authority, independence and the right, rights, and legitimacy....(21). Its energies are directed at making permanent, fixing the flux of experience. It exalts the individual (who wants to transcend nature and natural oblivion). It values action over feeling, thought over sensation. Its ultimate goal is transcendence of nature; its immediate goal is the attainment and maintenance of power in the world whether as force or authority (22).

While the feminine principle, in its association with nature, is cyclic, dynamic, and timeless, the masculine principle is linear and temporal and seeks to transcend not only nature but time and mortality as well (22).

In delineating these terms, French is careful to establish her own perspective:

I use these terms not because I believe they are accurate descriptions of human capacity or human experience, but because there are no other terms as precise in describing how humans have conceptualized their experience for the past three millennia (16).

These qualities, French emphasizes, in actuality are not

gender-exclusive; rather, all of these aspects of the gender principles are evident in all humans, and are manifested also in human traditions and institutions--in art and science, religion and law, philosophy and language. Yet it is true these polarities do occur in experience and between them there exist simultaneously a tension and an urge toward reconciliation or synthesis. In this urge for reconciliation it is possible to trace the connection of the gender principles with their dominant role in literature, for, according to French, "the fullest and most easily accessible expression of these ideas is found in literature" (16). Accordingly, "...much of the thought and literature of the past," French says, "has been devoted to attempts to produce a synthesis" (29).

Virginia Woolf, according to Nancy Topping Bazin in her study Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision, had arrived at a separation of gender-associated qualities remarkably parallel to Marilyn French's compilation of gender principles. Further, Woolf associated certain literary forms with each of these gender-related perspectives. Woolf's own use of literary form to reflect androgynous perception suggests that associations of gender with structure inform her perspective of other authors (and probably vice versa).

Woolf, according to Bazin, finds the masculine perspective fundamentally realistic and empirical, grounded in a factual, rational approach to a reality fixed in time.

It is marked both by an involvement with complex society (politics, science, accomplishments) and by the apprehension of impermanence. These attributes correspond to the aspect of the masculine principle French terms "power in the world," and to those which seek to fix the flow of events, to make things permanent. For Woolf, a tendency toward singularity or apartness marks the masculine perspective. The feminine perspective, on the other hand, is centered on the timelessness that flows beneath the flux. Concerned with apprehending the unity of experience, it is mystical and beyond a rational knowing; the feminine perspective is a "knowing in terms of togetherness" (3).

According to Bazin, Woolf also considers each mode of perception as manifested in distinct linguistic structures. Masculine perception for Woolf is presented by way of the traditional narrative mode which records an empirical reality in sequential time. She views feminine perspective in literature as manifested in a different kind of order, where design and aesthetic form dominate in communicating holistic experience (28). For Woolf, these two literary approaches are further distinguished by contrasting tropic patterns. In Woolf's view, metonymy, with its emphasis on contiguity and spatial and temporal sequence, is most representative of the masculine perspective. The trope or linguistic structure Woolf feels is most expressive of the feminine perspective is metaphor, with its emphasis on identity and substitution and most often employed in poetry (28). (As Woolf makes clear in

"A Room of One's Own," and Marilyn French reiterates in Shakespeare's Division of Experience, these distinct perspectives, although long associated with their respective genders, are not gender-exclusive).

Woolf's reference to Coleridge's linking of great minds with an androgynous nature is a recognition of Coleridge's conviction that certain writers manifest a synthesis of these "masculine" and "feminine" qualities in literature. It appears Coleridge was acutely sensitive both to the distinctions French and Woolf delineate and to their historical movement toward reconciliation. Jean Watson, in her paper "Coleridge's Androgynous Ideal," traces the roots of Coleridge's vision to Christian and Judaic traditions, and beyond to classical myth. Coleridge, she writes, in addition to being well-versed in Christian theology, was aware of such complex and interrelated sources as alchemy, Kabbalism, and of the influences of Plato and Boehme as well. In Christian theology, for instance, Christ is seen as the embodiment of the androgynous ideal--a perfect unity and resolution of the polarized tension between male and female. In Kabbalistic tradition, "God is an androgynous Unity" (38), a unity which was originally reflected in man, but, after Adam's fall, became fractured. The ongoing task of man, then, is to seek an integration of these disparate facets, and in doing so realize his natural and harmonious state.

In a seminal position in western culture is Plato's

ingenuous account in the Dialogues of Plato, related through his character Aristophanes, of how Zeus, fearing man's power, split apart one of the original human forms (there were three) which was:

round and had four hands and four feet, back and sides forming a circle, one head with two faces looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond.

After splitting these rotund beings in two, Zeus then:

bade Apollo give the face and the neck a half turn.... Apollo twisted the face and pulled the skin around over that which in our language is called the belly, like the purses which draw in, and he made one mouth at the center, which he fastened in a knot (this is called the navel).... After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and threw their arms about one another eager to grow into one, and would have perished from hunger without ever making an effort, because they did not like to do anything apart...so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man. Each of us when separate is but the indenture of a man, having one side only like a flat fish, and he is always looking for his other half (Symposium 189 D ff).

The common theme Coleridge noted running throughout both myth and literature is that of the androgynous ideal which finds its roots in original states. If the nature of God is the androgynous ideal and man shares the essence of God, then by extension, this state becomes the ideal for man also. Watson points out a linkage here with Coleridge's definition of a symbol, which "partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part of the Unity, of which it is the

representative" (The Statesman's Manual 30). The androgynous mind as the ideal is thus a symbol for the unity and wholeness inherent in the nature of God.

Chapter Three

The Androgynous Ideal Personified in Literature:

Myth and Modern Thought

One way literature has embraced this impulse toward a unity of polarized qualities is by creating characters who, in manifesting the reconciliation of the gender principles, become symbols of the androgynous ideal. One early and especially evocative literary prototype of the "sublime androgyne" (as the androgynous ideal personified is called) is the god Dionysus in the Bacchae. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, in Toward a Recognition of Androgyny, finds that the

unbounded and hence fundamentally indefinable nature of androgyny is best evoked by borrowing a description of Dionysus from the critic Thomas Rosenmyer's discussion of the Bacchae of Euripides: 'Dionysus, who is Euripides' embodiment of universal vitality, is described variously by chorus, herdsman, commoners, and princes. The descriptions do not tally, for the god cannot be defined. He can perhaps be totaled but the sum is never definitive; further inspection adds new features to the old.... For one thing, Dionysus appears to be neither woman nor man: or, better, he presents himself as woman-in-man, or man-in-woman, the unlimited personality' (x-xi).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modern psychological thought has given both mythical and succeeding literary characters representing the androgynous ideal a renewed validity by confirming more or less scientifically what human nature has intuitively divined about itself. Myth is seen by Freud, for instance, as a projection of the unconscious human psyche by primitive man who "transposed the

structural conditions of his own mind into the external world" (Totem and Taboo 89). Later, Carl Jung, whose thinking transcended the analytical, categorizing objectivity of earlier approaches to embrace a more visionary one, wrote, in Symbols of Transformation:

[M]ythological man perceived the unconscious in all the adversities and contrarities of external nature without ever suspecting that he was gazing at the paradoxical background of his own consciousness (260).

In using characters to embody a universally shared condition of the human psyche, Shakespeare often replicates the method of myth. One recognizes drama and literature, of course, as consciously conceived works of art that dramatically express original archetypal themes emerging organically and unconsciously from experience. That Shakespeare experienced an evolution in his sensitivity to the theme of androgyny is evident in a number of works, especially plays, exploring the androgynous ideal:

In the 1590s Shakespeare was already preoccupied not only with the sublime androgyne motif, but with androgyny's aesthetic translation from the purely verbal genre of poetry into the hybrid verbal/material dimensions of drama (Whittier 187).

Whittier, in her article "The sublime androgyne motif in three Shakespearean works" discusses the ideal as portrayed, for example, in Romeo and Juliet, Anthony and Cleopatra, and Sonnet 20. However, for this study, three of Shakespeare's comedies lend themselves especially well to the illumination of gender-related perspectives offered by French and Woolf and supported by Jung's concept of the animus and anima:

aspects of the psyche offering further validity to the androgynous ideal.

Jung focuses here on the female psyche, but the focus, with its corresponding principles, can be reversed and directed just as effectively toward the male psyche. He describes the animus as "the male personification of the unconscious in woman" (Man and His Symbols 198), a structure capable of both positive and negative effects. Identification of her own animus marks a significant juncture in a woman's self-knowledge:

If she realizes who and what her animus is and what he does to her, her animus can turn into an invaluable inner companion who endows her with the masculine qualities of initiative, courage, objectivity... (206).

(And here one must give Jung the benefit of the doubt he is referring to the masculine principle rather than inherently owned, gender-exclusive qualities). By assuming a masculine role, a woman can explore the latent "masculine" aspects of her own personality. Assimilating the animus ultimately results in a greater integration of the psyche and expansion of personal effectiveness.

The following chapter will briefly highlight a contemporary drama as a modern reference point; the focus will then shift to a particularly intriguing method Shakespeare uses to breathe life into a synthesis of gender-related polarities. The aim is to illustrate how Shakespeare gives substance to the androgynous ideal by employing the

fascinating dramatic device of opposite-sex disguise. It will become apparent the device can be a vehicle for a reconciliation of the gender principles described by Marilyn French, a synthesis supported by Jung's conception of how the anima or animus is incorporated into personality; the ultimate effect of this fusion is a transformation of character.

Chapter Four

Going Incognito: The Use of Opposite-Sex Disguise as a Mechanism for a Reconciliation of the Gender Principles

Usually (but not always) associated with romantic comedy, disguise consistently introduces the element of intrigue, if not downright farce and hilarity. Ostensibly, disguise serves merely as protective cover. But it is clear the function of disguise is more complex than simply obscuring a particular identity. Seeking beyond that initial practical use yields much in exploring the ways androgyny is expressed in literature. Just as looking behind a camouflage reveals an unexpected identity, so delving beyond the device itself reveals some interesting psychological complexities. This is especially true of opposite-sex disguise where a number of salient factors are operating. Before examining three comedies in which Shakespeare gives substance to his vision of the androgynous ideal, a brief consideration of an excellent contemporary reference point will provide perspective.

The film Tootsie is a modern study of the ideas inherent in French's delineation of the gender principles supported by Jung's conception of the anima and animus. The entire theme of the film is the reconciliation and balance of opposite-gender qualities afforded by opposite-sex disguise. As a reference point to Shakespeare's three comedies (in each of which the focus is a woman), the film is no less valuable

because its main character is a man. On the contrary, it illustrates even more clearly the driving principle of the phenomenon: that playing a role of the opposite gender not only allows expression of culture-suppressed, latent qualities of that gender but can result in a synthesis of disparate qualities and ultimately effect a personality transformation. Philosopher Sam Keen, in his book, The Passionate Life, affirms the ancient grasp of this phenomenon by primitive peoples and as dramatized in Greek mythology:

The fledgling shaman would often wear the clothes of the opposite sex in an effort to gain the knowledge of the other half of the psyche. Greek mythology portrayed Tiresias as the wisest of men because he had spent several years as a woman (156).

Because the film reflects the cumulative wisdom of myth, literary tradition and modern psychological thought, it affords an expanded appreciation of Shakespeare's remarkable insight and craft.

Because Tootsie, too, is a drama of personal transformation, it is best to regard the main character's evolution of psyche in terms of "before" and "after." Before, the main character is a struggling young actor in New York named Michael Dorsey. He is the masculine principle incarnate. In the long tradition of the acting profession, he is out of work (except for a small job as a drama instructor), and is aggressively trying to remedy the situation. Early on, in an emotional dispute with his agent it becomes clear why he seems to be having more than the usual trouble finding work. The truth is, his agent admits

to him, he has a reputation: he is pushy; he is too argumentative and opinionated; he is too aggressive. "Nobody will hire you," his agent finally shouts in frustration. "You're too much trouble--get some therapy!" And in a rather unorthodox way, Michael does indeed "get therapy." The course of the play is a progression of character changes ultimately effecting a transformation in Michael Dorsey. One especially significant "before" scene occurs during a surprise birthday party Michael's friends have given him. The birthday party itself is significant because it signals a kind of rebirth of the latent parts of Michael Dorsey's lop-sided psyche. Michael, a little tipsy, is pontificating loudly on dramatic theory; his friend Sandy (who symbolizes certain aspects of the feminine principle, but also seems somewhat stereotyped in "feminine" qualities, such as hysteria) is cuddling a guest's baby. She tries to engage Michael's attention, but he pushes the baby roughly away and continues his vehement spouting of abstractions; soon after, he corners an attractive and aspiring actress with the traditional wolfish line. Both moments have important corollaries later in the film. When Sandy is rejected for the part of tough hospital administrator in a soap opera (a part for which Michael has coached her in vain), Michael, in a moment of inspired bravado, decides to audition for the part himself, as a woman. Michael, in spite of his one-dimensional personality, is an excellent character actor

and, as "Dorothy Michaels," lands the job. The ensuing consequences are, as expected, hilarious. But coupled with the farce, insight dawns--first on the audience and finally on Michael himself.

With Michael's assumption of the newly created and amazingly authentic persona, "Dorothy Michaels" (only his roommate knows of the charade), Michael's life begins to change dramatically. Dressed for work each day from panty hose and brassiere on out, even the merest shadow of a beard dealt with by close shave and thick make-up, something mysterious and wondrous begins to happen to the way Michael is in the world. For one thing, "Dorothy" becomes an immediate success with a nation-wide fan club, a result of Michael's firm grasp of assertiveness emerging through the disguise and perceived as "feminine strength." One unexpected and complicated consequence of his charade is that Michael falls in love with Julie, an actress in the soap opera, and she in turn finds "Dorothy" a valued friend and confidant whose no-nonsense approach to men begins to affect the way she perceives herself. The audience becomes aware, considerably before Michael does, that he is a perfect reflection of the villain of the piece, the director who thoughtlessly uses Julie and patronizes "Dorothy." Like Michael, the director is selfish, egotistical, opportunistic, sexist, overly aggressive and inconstant. It is only when Michael views these negative attributes from the feminine perspective as Julie's friend that he begins to see the

parallels. After he deftly succeeds, as "Dorothy," in handling a sensitive situation on the soap opera's set with a superb balance of his own assertiveness tempered by the graciousness demanded by his role, he is puzzled, and says wistfully to his roommate, "I think 'Dorothy' is smarter than I am."

By the time he spends a weekend in upstate New York at Julie's father's farm, Michael has become so thoroughly affected by the role that his personality takes on a dramatically changed aspect. He realizes a genuine transformation is surely occurring when Julie casually thrusts her tiny daughter into "Dorothy"'s arms. As Michael, he holds the baby awkwardly and stiffly, and then slowly, as "Dorothy" he cradles her naturally and confidently, a revealing comparison with his earlier attitude toward babies. Michael, in fact, has so perfectly integrated the seemingly polarized aspects of the masculine and feminine principles that, as "Dorothy," he has become irresistible to Julie's father and the farce reaches its comic apex.

The qualities emerging in Michael have not been mysteriously sewn into the dresses "Dorothy" must wear to maintain the disguise. Rather, the part has mysteriously given Michael an essential latitude to express qualities he has always possessed.

Finally, and with characteristic panache, he reveals his true identity on a live broadcast. Ultimately he must go

back to being Michael Dorsey and there is a moment when the audience is sceptical of a lasting transformation. But it is evident his insight is real and his transformation enduring when he awkwardly attempts to explain himself to Julie (who is understandably enraged with his deception): "I was a better man as 'Dorothy' than I was when I was a man, if you know what I mean." When Julie relents slightly and says, with a certain wistfulness, "I miss 'Dorothy,' and Michael, tapping his chest, replies, "You don't have to, she's right here," it is clear Michael has not only incorporated, but accepted, his anima.

From a new generation of critics have emerged new perspectives on this time-honored theme of mistaken identity consistent with themes in myth, as noted by Sam Keen, and with the idea underlying Jung's anima and animus. In her recent riveting and controversial book, Sexual Personae, Camille Paglia presents an astonishing array of stimulating new perspectives on the sexual roles (and their ramifications) played out by the great writers of the world and certain of their characters. Paglia, too, sees in Shakespeare's use of opposite-sex disguise more than just the trappings of mistaken identity and farce. Her perspective supports Woolf's impression that Shakespeare's work exhibits an androgynous nature, and notes as stunning his understanding of the transformative power of opposite-sex disguise:

...Shakespeare is an alchemist. In his treatment of

sex and personality, Shakespeare is a shape-shifter and master of transformations. He returns dramatic impersonation to its ritual origins in the cult of Dionysus, where masks are magic. Shakespeare recognizes that western identity, in its long pagan line, is impersonation (198).

The three Renaissance comedies in the following study reveal how Shakespeare uses masks for magic. The magic he wields originates from his intuitive and astonishing grasp of the same phenomenon occurring in Tootsie:

...Shakespeare's characters are forever changing their clothes, especially in the comedies. Shakespeare takes the inherited theme of mistaken identity, as old as Menander and Plautus, and turns it into a meditation on Renaissance role-playing. He is the first to reflect upon the fluid nature of modern gender and identity (Paglia 197).

The plays provide a canvas on which Shakespeare paints the "fluid nature" of three exceptional women. Paglia further testifies:

In these plays [the comedies in which Shakespeare disguises women as men], clothes make the man. By fixing the social persona, costume transforms thought, behavior, and gender (203).

Among Shakespeare's most appealing women, Rosalind, in As You Like It, Viola, in Twelfth Night, and Portia, in The Merchant Of Venice, form an interesting triad. Their individual character evolutions illustrate certain intriguing consequences of opposite-sex disguise. Observing first their ostensible reasons for disguise, then tracing the expansion of experience the device allows can offer a new perspective on an old contrivance. What emerges is the notion that Shakespeare uses opposite-sex disguise as a mechanism not merely for protective covering or protracted

farce, but as a vehicle for a synthesis of the qualities Marilyn French refers to as the gender principles.

Rosalind, among the three women, has the stellar role. Paglia likens Rosalind to Mercurius, "the god and planet" who is "liquid mercury or quicksilver, the elixir of transformations" (199). Paglia elaborates on this perception of Rosalind:

Mercurius, first conceived by Shakespeare, is the androgynous spirit of impersonation, the living embodiment of multiplicity of persona. Mercurius possesses verbal and therefore mental power. Shakespeare's great Mercurius androgyne is the transvestite [disguised] Rosalind...(199).

To observe this mercurial nature learning to assert itself, the study will follow Rosalind, as well as Viola and Portia, from "before" to "after" states to observe the progress of their individual transformations.

In As You Like It, when Rosalind is banished by harsh decree from her uncle, the Duke Frederick's court, Celia, his daughter, suggests the two women flee the court and join the usurped Duke Senior in Arden Forest. But, because "Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold" (Iiii 106), they decide to go in disguise. Celia will put herself "in poor and mean attire" (Iiii 107) and be a peasant girl. Rosalind, warming enthusiastically to the idea, decides that since she is "more than common tall" (Iiii 111), she will be more intimidating as a man with "A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh, A boar-spear in my hand..." (Iiii 113-114). The name Rosalind chooses for her assumed identity reveals something of the

kind of character she begins to project in Arden. She declares:

I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page,
And therefore look you call me Ganymede.
(Iiii 120-121)

Her use of the name Ganymede, of whom Jove was unnaturally fond, anticipates the androgynous identity Rosalind is soon to discover is a consequence of assuming an opposite-sex identity.

Early in Twelfth Night, Viola, like Rosalind, finds herself in a perilous position. Caught in a violent storm, the ship she and her twin brother had recently sailed on has split apart and sunk. With the captain and a pitiful number of survivors she is washed up on the shores of Illyria; her brother Sebastian is missing. Dependent solely on her own resources and acutely conscious of her vulnerability, she wishes she:

Might not be delivered to the world
Till I had made mine own occasion mellow,
What my estate is.
(Iii 43-45)

Having learned there is a Duke in Illyria who has for some time sought in vain the suit of a highly ranked lady in mourning, she sees a way to bide her time until her fortune clears. She appeals to the captain:

Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
For such disguise as haply shall become
The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke.
Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him...
...for I can sing,
And speak to him in many sorts of music....
(Iiii 53-58)

When Viola appears next it will be in her new identity as the charming and versatile young man Cesario, right-hand man to the duke, and already much in his favor. For Viola, the time spent in disguise will be one of waiting and discovery. As Marilyn French notes, "...a happy structure--one which merges the gender principles--cannot be imposed, must be discovered. For the revelation of this, Viola trusts to time" (119).

Portia, in The Merchant of Venice, does not change identities until the fourth act. The effect is rather startling and made even more brilliant coming this late. Unlike Rosalind and Viola, Portia is not so straightforward about her purpose in assuming a masculine disguise. Exhilarated in her newly-married state and having sent her groom Bessario off to Venice with her generous offer to bail his friend Antonio out of financial ruin, she presents an image of playfulness, grace, and sheer delight in living. Thus, when she sends a letter to her learned uncle, Doctor Bellario (who, one discovers later, is coincidentally the lawyer called to hear the court case between Shylock and Antonio) and asks for "notes and garments" (IIIiv 51), she gives the impression she is merely plotting a girlish escapade. The plan, she tells her maid Nerissa, is to "see our husbands / Before they think of us" (IIIiv 57-58). Nerissa, not understanding, asks, "Shall they see us?" (IIIiv 59). Portia replies almost giddily, but portending the same shift toward androgyny as Rosalind, "They shall, Nerissa, but

in such a habit / That they shall think we are accomplished /
 With that we lack" (IIIiv 60-62). She challenges Nerissa
 that when they are "both accoutered like young men," (IIIiv
 64) she'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,

And wear a dagger with the braver grace,
 And speak between the change of man and boy
 With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
 Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
 Like a fine bragging youth; and tell quaint lies....
(IIIiv 65-69)

She has in her mind, she assures Nerissa, "A thousand raw
 tricks of these bragging Jacks, / Which I will practice
 (IIIiv 76-78). Reflecting much about Portia's astute powers
 of observation, the picture she paints promises she will be
 equally as clever in mimicry, but foretells little of the
 depth of role she will soon assume.

A slight digression will be valuable at this point in
 order to compare the character evolution of disguised
 individuals when Shakespeare employs opposite-sex disguise
 with the effect achieved when he employs same-sex disguise.
 The comparison illustrates further what a curious phenomenon
 opposite-sex disguise proves to be.

When Shakespeare hides true identity with a same-sex
 disguise, the original purpose for the deception is never
 altered nor does the disguise itself begin to act
 mysteriously upon the hidden identity. In Measure for
Measure, Duke Vincentio's intention in obscuring his identity
 beneath a monk's robe is covert observation and operation.
 His interest is to restore respect for the law while

observing his appointed deputy Angelo in order to see "If power change purpose" (Iiv 54). Fully utilizing his new role, he becomes the ubiquitous producer/director of what amounts to a play-within-a-play as he manipulates people as pawns across his Viennese chessboard.

In King Lear, Edgar assumes an intriguing form of disguise, which is to unclothe. Stripped to the skin and seemingly mad, as Poor Tom he mirrors Lear's pathetic condition of vulnerability, instability, rejection and despair. But Edgar's purposes--protective covering and then protector of his blinded father Gloucester--remain the same until he reveals his identity. Like Edgar, Kent too, in King Lear hides his identity for reasons of protection. Using disguise as boldly as Edgar does, he returns to the thick of personal danger in an unquestionable expression of love and loyalty to Lear. But, as with Edgar, the assumed identity does not act upon him.

In As You Like It, Celia, a duke's daughter disguised as the rustic shepherd girl Aliena (denoting her alien status), stands as an excellent counterpoint to Rosalind, who is disguised as Aliena's tall brother, Ganymede. In Rosalind it will be possible to observe a new expression of latent qualities; in Aliena there is a character change, but not in terms of a reconciliation of the gender principles.

Returning to As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and The Merchant of Venice, the stage has been set for intrigue by the introduction of disguise. However, although the original

function of disguise has been to hide identity, it is soon to undergo a critical transition as the male disguise begins to act upon each of the women who have donned it in Shakespeare's three comedies.

As Rosalind, Viola, and Portia prepare to embark on their various adventures, the moment each woman outfits herself in male attire marks a critical transition in her personal evolution. It signals a temporary laying aside of an accustomed perspective in order to "try on" a perspective usually perceived as antagonistic, or at least "unnatural," but which will actually become complimentary. Each is entering what Marilyn French has termed the masculine principle. Recalling that the feminine principle has both benevolent and destructive facets reflected respectively by the "inlaw aspect" and the "outlaw aspect," it is clear Shakespeare is accenting the "inlaw aspect" of the feminine principle in Rosalind, Viola and Portia. (Only compare them with that other intriguing trio, the Three Witches in MacBeth, or with Lady MacBeth herself, or with Reagan and Goneril in King Lear to see the vivid contrast with the "outlaw aspect" of the feminine principle.)

As the three women, clad now in doublet and hose instead of petticoats, step into their acquired masculine roles, it is possible to observe the signs indicating the masculine principle is beginning to operate. Arriving in Arden Forest Rosalind admits to Celia:

I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman; but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat. Therefore, courage, good Aliena! (IIIiv 4-8).

It is apparent from this speech Shakespeare is choosing to perpetuate the prevailing attitude associated with the inlaw aspect of the feminine principle: woman is the "weaker vessel" to be shored up by the stronger, more courageous male. Yet, it also marks the entrance of a new note: while Rosalind remains conscious of her vulnerability, the role of Ganymede, the young shepherd, is already beginning to exert an influence upon her. Significantly, it points to an important and unmistakable truth: it is Rosalind's own qualities that have been summoned and are responding.

Together with a new level of assertiveness, Rosalind begins to exhibit a stunning verbal agility. As Paglia notes of Rosalind's increased verbal fluidity, "A superb language of arrogant command suddenly flows from her. She is all sex and power" (203). Warming to her new role, Rosalind begins to rival the Duke in Measure for Measure in observing, directing and instructing as she begins to orchestrate events. First, she devises a scheme in which she ostensibly takes on the task of "curing" Orlando of his lovesickness for the absent Rosalind while actually conducting a rather pragmatic test of his sincerity and steadfastness. Playing devil's advocate with so-called "feminine" attributes, she explains her procedure first requires Orlando woo her while Ganymede will play Rosalind and in turn, "grieve, be

effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical...shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles" (IIIiii 385-387). Having successfully launched that scheme, Rosalind takes an assertive stance in Silvius' and Phoebe's "pageant...between the pale complexion of true love / And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain" (IIIiv 47). In her exhortation to Phoebe: "Who might be your mother / That you insult, exult, and all at once / Over the wretched?" (IIIiv 35-37), and to Silvius: "You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her / Like foggy south.../ You are a thousand times a properer man / Than she a woman" (IIIiv 49-52), Rosalind proves to be a "busy actor in their play" (IIIiv 55). Emerging unmistakably through Rosalind's disguise are the qualities Paglia calls the "main characteristic" of "Shakespeare's great Mercurius androgyne": "an electric wit, dazzling, triumphant, euphoric, combined with rapid alternations of persona" (199).

In Twelfth Night, Viola discovers her disguise is causing her to come to terms with the woman beneath the camouflage. She finds herself in the ironic position of messenger entrusted to carry love notes from Duke Orsino (with whom she has fallen in love) to Olivia, who in turn, in the best tradition of farce, is entranced by her, (as Cesario). Viola realizes it is a position that could easily be exploited by a less ethical person:

Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness

[I would] Make me a willow cabin at your gate...
 Hallo your name to the reverberate hills...
 Cry out "Olivia!" O, you should not rest
 Between the elements of air and earth
 But you should pity me.

(IV 271-277)

The result of this fusion of qualities Viola begins to express utterly charms Olivia, on whom the Duke has had no effect. In fact, as Paglia remarks, "The fetching Viola is a conflation of sexual representations" (201-2).

A recollection of Jung's description of the animus can cast further psychological insight into Olivia's attraction for Cesario. Reflection of the animas (or anima, in men) may offer an explanation for one of the more curious and unexpected ramifications of opposite-sex disguise, which is the discovery that someone of the disguised sex has fallen in love with the new identity. This development is not new with Shakespeare; it has traditionally lent an "erotic piquancy" (Paglia 205) to the time-honored device of mistaken identity. However, the language Shakespeare's characters use in acknowledging their attraction signals his departure from literary tradition in revealing his intuitive perception of how the anima or animus operates. Again, what has become visible is a fusion of gender qualities, made even more potent by the reflection of one's own anima or animus. In As You Like It, when the scornful Phoebe, the "literary" shepherd girl, succumbs to Ganymede, part of the attraction is a result of seeing her own animus before her; she finds in Ganymede an apparent masculinity coupled with the familiar

but strangely elusive sense of the feminine. Phoebe, musing over the qualities attracting her says:

It is a pretty youth; not very pretty.
But sure he's proud; and yet his pride becomes
him.

(IIIv 112-113)

This unexpected development, after her verbal lashing of Phoebe, astounds Rosalind but points to the amalgam of masculine and feminine attributes proving so attractive. She says of Silvius "He's fall'n in love with your foulness" and of Phoebe: "...she'll fall in love with my anger" (IIIv 66-67).

Olivia, in Twelfth Night, succumbs in much the same way for Cesario. No sooner has Cesario chided her for her haughty pride in ignoring the Duke's suit, than Olivia, alone, confesses her attraction:

Thy tongue, the face the limb, action and spirit
Do give the fivefold blazon...
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes.

(Iv 293-294, 297-298)

Indeed, it is Viola's feminine aspect, invisible and subtle, coupled with the masculine stance, that is so profoundly working its mystery as Olivia sees before her her own animus. Marilyn French feels that in producing Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, Shakespeare "makes the situation revokable by splitting Viola into two genders" (121).

In "Tootsie," in which the anima is brought into play, two men fall for "Dorothy." And one of them, who believes he likes clear distinctions between the sexes says ironically

"Bulls should be bulls, and roosters shouldn't lay eggs."
 He does not realize, in his attraction to "Dorothy," he is confronting his own anima, and the qualities he finds so charming in "Dorothy" are definitely not a manifestation of that polarized or single-dimensional view of gender.

Shakespeare does not require Portia, in The Merchant of Venice, to confront the unexpected event of becoming attractive to another woman while in disguise. Rather, Shakespeare concentrates her role to provide a magnificent example of the reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities.

From Portia's colorful description of the great range of roles in her repertoire, the audience has been prepared to see her next as a swashbuckling young dandy. It is with great surprise then that it witnesses Portia's maid Nerissa's entrance, in Act IV in the Venetian courtroom, in the role of a (male) Lawyer's Clerk. She carries a message that the venerable Bellario (Portia's uncle) has been taken ill but has sent in his place, Balthasar, "a young doctor [of law] of Rome" (IVi 153). The suspense is heightened by the catalogue of impressive credentials in Dr. Bellario's message serving as introduction to this young Balthasar:

I acquainted him with the cause in controversy
 between the Jew and Antonio the merchant. We
 turned o'er many books together. He is furnished
 with my opinion which, bettered with his own
 learning, the greatness whereof I cannot enough
 commend, comes with him at my importunity....
 [L]et his lack of years be no impediment to let him
 lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so

young a body with so old a head.

(IVi 154-159, 161-163)

Portia, as Balthasar, is indeed impressive. Conducting herself in an impeccably professional manner, she astounds her audience with the critical and pivotal role she has chosen to play, together with the way she carries it off. Lives and fortunes hang on what she will decide, and it soon becomes clear it is no mere lark she has embarked upon. In order to appreciate fully the significance of her acts and her message, it will be helpful to recall the world of experience she represents. Referring again to Marilyn French's description of the gender principles, Belmont, Portia's country villa, and the bustling, mercantile Venice can be seen to exist on opposite poles of the masculine / feminine gamut. Belmont, as the Green World, represents the feminine principle in its association with pleasure, nature, and timelessness. Venice, on the other hand, in its association with "power in the world," represents the masculine principle (French 104). Portia herself is an extension of the Green World of Belmont. In the expression of her qualities of generosity, openness, graciousness and acceptance (recall her adherence to her late father's wishes concerning a choice of husband), Portia, too, is associated with the feminine principle (French 104).

Garbed now in the robes of a lawyer (a highly venerated position in a city that turns on the masculine principle), she knows she commands respect. Believing the position will

lend sufficient authority to her views (which are predicated on a different rationale from the one prevailing in Venice), she begins with an appeal to mercy. Once she has learned Shylock is completely within the law in demanding his due, she pronounces with authority, "Then shall the Jew be merciful" (IVI 183). But Shylock is adamant; he demands, "On what compulsion must I, tell me that" (IVI 183). Her famous appeal to him for mercy, then, is grounded in the principle of giving: "The quality of mercy is not strained; / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven..." (IVI 184-185). Her plea to Shylock is that to temper justice with mercy is to be God-like: "...earthly power doth then show likest God's / When mercy seasons justice" (IVI 195-196). She further appeals to Shylock, that in demanding justice for himself, he consider the rationale:

That, in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

(IVI 198-201)

Shylock, however, remains adamant; he will stay with the letter of the law and have his "pound of flesh" (IVI 306).

At this impasse Portia enters fully into the masculine principle (French 104). Realizing she cannot sway the intractable Shylock on terms most familiar to her, she summons from her own impressive resources an insight into and a facility with the values associated with the masculine principle, which "claims to be able to define and administer justice and...supports law and order as an arrangement

imposed and maintained by force" (French 21). Portia realizes Shylock's inflexibility in his demand and respect for the strict letter of the law is precisely what makes him vulnerable. Using the only code Shylock respects, Portia turns the tables on him by meeting him on his own terms and pointing out "...this bond doth give thee here no jot of blood" (IVi 365). Therefore if a drop of blood is produced when cutting a pound of flesh from Antonio's breast, Shylock's fortune will be forfeited, and he must concede his defeat.

Portia's great charm and her abiding perspective are an inherent part of the feminine principle. But in taking on the masculine disguise, the role itself calls forth qualities amplifying her effectiveness. Like Rosalind and Viola, Portia retains the admirable aspects of the feminine principle while allowing expression to her admirable, but latent and unpracticed, aspects of the masculine principle. The result is a synthesis of complementary qualities whose ultimate achievement is a more fully realized person. Each is evolving toward Thomas Rosenmeyer's description of Dionysus: the "embodiment of universal vitality."

The transformations in these three plays reflect Marilyn French's assertion that Shakespeare's work "represents a lifelong effort to harmonize moral qualities he did associate with the two genders, and to synthesize opposing or seemingly opposed states and qualities" (17). Whittier, too,

underscores Shakespeare's androgynous vision given substance in these plays:

That Shakespeare attempted a dramatic representation of the sublime androgyne testifies to his daring genius, and also to the steadfastness of his concern with the tension between word and world, concept and actualization (187).

With this view in mind, on a broader scope these three women might also be considered agents in the synthesis of a number of polarities that concerned Shakespeare. The qualities Shakespeare brings together in harmonious accord in As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and The Merchant of Venice are consistent with those Marilyn French calls the gender principles. Recalling just a few, one can witness a balance between emotion and rationality, thought and action, the individual and the community, nature and society, receptivity and assertiveness, timelessness and fixed time, circularity and linearity. Arden and Belmont, as representatives of the Green World, embrace the feminine principle in their associations with nature, grace, desire, and timelessness. Illyria, too, seems to "exist out of time" (French 118). When these three plays culminate, a synthesis has occurred between the world of Arden and the urban life of the court, between the gracious life at Belmont and the frenetic life of Venice, and in Illyria there is a return to reality, represented by marriage and a righting of the order. Qualities formerly antagonistic can now be seen as complementary and mutually supportive. Even romance and realism are allowed to strike a harmony in each of these

plays.

The transformations of character in these plays and the ultimate balancing of polarities form a collective and particular expression of Shakespeare's androgynous perspective. The message is, admitting and incorporating diverse perceptions allows for an expansion of perspective; like the "unlimited personality" of Dionysus, this widening of perspective admits whole realms of possibility.

In Shakespeare's three women, where opposite-sex disguise figures as transformative medium, the movement toward androgyny is essentially a movement toward a unified consciousness. Keats's work reflects a remarkably similar progression. His brief but prolific career traces a steady movement toward a unified consciousness visible in both his poetry and his letters. In exploring Keats's works as androgynous expression, Virginia Woolf's musings are again the impetus, while the opposing, gender-linked perspectives Marilyn French and Virginia Woolf catalogue remain as a reference for gauging a balance between these perspectives. The fundamental understanding of the androgynous ideal gained thus far will continue to inform the study. The aim in the following chapter is to discover what forces are at work in Keats's movement toward a unified consciousness, prompting Virginia Woolf to highlight Keats's nature and work as androgynous, as she did Shakespeare's.

Chapter Five
Expressions of Androgyny in Keats:
Toward a Unified Consciousness

Androgyny, an ideal weaving throughout myth and literature, is foremost an expansion of perspective. Admitting and incorporating diverse ways of looking at reality figure as central to this expansion. Androgynous vision, androgynous nature--the "unlimited personality" of Dionysis--is shaped first by acknowledging contraries, then allowing them dynamic interplay.

Virginia Woolf's assessment of Shakespeare and John Keats, both the men and their works, as androgynous, turns on this idea. Keats's fundamental impulse toward acknowledging and reconciling polarities is perhaps most responsible for frequently made comparisons of his nature and work with those of Shakespeare. As Shakespeare's three woman do, Keats himself progresses toward a unified consciousness, his movement motivated by his impulse to confront polarities. At the core of this impulse is the poet's seminal position of "Negative Capability." The idea lends itself admirably to an androgynous understanding. It not only clarifies Keats's distinctive and habitual stance in confronting polarities, it also facilitates a critical approach to his poetry as androgynous expression.

Keats's notion of "Negative Capability" as a statement of "poetic creed" (Gittings 175) appears first in his personal

correspondence. Because Keats used the informal, spontaneous medium of correspondence as a kind of sounding board for his emerging artistic speculations, his letters are a useful adjunct to his poetry in determining his intrinsic perspective.

Keats first used the term "Negative Capability" in a letter to his brothers on December 28, 1817, briefly elaborating on this precept that had recently jelled in his awareness. For several months he had been mulling over possible ideals he might adopt as artistic creed compatible with his own poetic and philosophic bent; the idea breaks through as sudden insight (Bate 248). His remarks reflect how thoroughly he apprehended Shakespeare's androgynous perspective and how natural it seemed to embrace a similar viewpoint:

[S]everal things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously--I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason....

(Letters. Ed. Maurice Buxton Forman I 75)

Walter Jackson Bates, in his monumental biography of Keats, interprets Keats's seemingly oxymoronic conception of "Negative Capability" as "an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality in its full and diverse concreteness" (249). The "negative" qualification refers to the state of mind required to insure openness and receptivity --a negation of one's own identity. This state of mind,

deliberate in its passivity, insures not only an empathic understanding, but allows for the open consideration of polarities (the "Mysteries and uncertainties" of experience). A further aim of this suppression of the poet's personality, points out Douglas Bush (Bate's mentor), is "to become and thereby render most vividly, the essence, the 'thisness' of the subject" (John Keats 60).

"Capability" connotes a tolerance for ambiguity. As Keats envisions it (and later gives substance to it in his poetry, "capability" is not active, assertive, authoritative; rather, it is receptive, transformative. In incorporating, as Camille Paglia suggests, "female waiting, a refusal to intervene, impose or dominate" (381), it signals an androgynous perspective:

The identity-free poet is a feminine receptacle in which pour the Many of nature....The Keatsean man of vision is a transsexual shaman like Empedocles, who claimed that in former lives he was a boy, a girl, a bush, a bird, and a fish (382).

Bate points out that critics often focus on the words "fact and reason," later in the statement, as pejorative, rather than the more significant "irritable." It is an important distinction when considering the totality of Keats's nature. Reaching after fact and reason is not the prohibition. Rather, when the mind becomes impatient ("irritable") for resolution and prematurely accepts or rationalizes partial knowing, it necessarily limits the full apprehension of harmony ("in which the emerging 'Truth' is

felt as 'Beauty'") that results when the imagination discovers its object (Bate 249-50).

The image of the mind as "feminine receptacle" is especially striking in a subsequent letter to his friend John Reynolds of February 19, 1818. The ideal creative stance Keats embraces in his term "Negative Capability" finds substance as a metaphor of flower-bee relations as he spells out the distinction between receptivity and the accumulation of disparate facts, the reasoning process Bate calls "deliberating, analyzing, and piecing experience together through 'consequetive' reasoning" (250):

It has been an old Comparison for our urging on--the Bee hive--however it seems to me that we should rather be the flower than the Bee....Now it is more noble to sit like Jove tha[n] to fly like Mercury --let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey-bee like, buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at: but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive--budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favors us with a visit.

(Letters. Ed. Maurice Buxton Forman 112)

"Negative Capability" may be understood as Keats's position of tolerance in the face of contraries or polarized ways of viewing experience. The creative mind must be openly receptive to insights wrought from the entire spectrum of experience:

The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing--to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts....

(Letters. Ed Hyder Rollins II 213)

Keats's distinctive creative stance acknowledges opposing perceptions of existence, a receptivity Virginia

Woolf believed signals an androgynous nature; his poetry stands as his unique creative response to these contraries. To provide a gauge for tracing expressions of androgyny in Keats's poetry, it is useful here to recall the delineation, made by both Marilyn French and Virginia Woolf, of polarities traditionally regarded as gender-related, but not gender-exclusive:

The Gender Principles (French)

<u>Masculine</u>	<u>Feminine</u>
* Ability to kill	* Ability to give birth
* Associated with prowess, ownership, with physical courage, assertiveness, authority, independence, rights and legitimacy	* Associated with nature and impulses toward acceptance of simple continuation, of present pleasure, surrender to mortality
* Energies directed at making things permanent, fixing the flux of experience	* Split exists reflecting a duality in nature: benevolent ("inlaw"), destructive ("outlaw")
* Exalts the individual (who wants to transcend nature and natural oblivion)	* "Inlaw" is nutritive, regenerating, supportive
* Values action over feeling, thought over sensation	* "Outlaw" is associated with darkness, chaos, flesh, sinister, magic, and above all, sexuality (also has the ability to kill)
* Immediate goal is the attainment of power in the world	

* Ultimate goal is to transcend nature	* Circular, associated with the cycles of nature,
* Claims to be able to define and administer justice	eternal recurrence, eternity and the present moment
* Supports law and order as	* Exalts the community over
* an arrangement imposed and maintained by force or authority	the individual, feeling over action, sensation over thought
* Linear, temporal	* Circular, atemporal
* Projecting, aggressive	* Receptive, passive

Attributes Related to Gender (Woolf)

Masculine

- * Realistic and empirical
- * Grounded in the factual, rational
- * Approach to a reality fixed in time
- * Apprehension of impermanence
- * Tendency toward singularity
- * Involvement in complex society: politics, science, accomplishments
- * In literature, represented by narrative mode, which communicates sequential experience

Feminine

- * Mystical and beyond a rational knowing, intuitive
- * Centered on timelessness that lies beneath the flux
- * Concerned with apprehending the unity of experience
- * Knowing in terms of togetherness
- * In literature, represented by modes in which design and aesthetic form dominate in communicating holistic experience: metaphor

Keats's writing life is among the most unique and tragic of major poets. He was eighteen when he first attempted poetry; he was dead at twenty-five. The first few years of writing produced only mediocre, often archly sentimental verse. But from 1816, when he was twenty-one, until the end of 1819, his twenty-fourth year, he wrote an astonishing number of masterpieces. In many ways it seems Keats's short life was telescoped passage. A maturation of the creative process that would normally evolve over a long lifetime, where insight is wrested from passage, is for Keats compressed into just three years. It is reflected in the growth of insight apparent between one of the earliest of his successful poems, "Sleep and Poetry," and his final great ode, "To Autumn." What emerges from this brief but prolific career, as Leon Waldoff remarks in Keats and the Silent Work of Imagination, is "a pattern of progressive refinement" (100).

In "Sleep and Poetry," Keats outlines a regimen for his growth as a poet patterned on those undertaken by earlier great writers (Virgil, Milton, Spenser). It is the model of a young person's dream for his future. Imbued with confidence and ambition, the poem vibrates with the promise of youth on the threshold of discovery and achievement. Yet the intimation that he has very little time to achieve that goal ("O for ten years, that I may overwhelm / Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed / That my own soul has to itself

decreed") (Lines 96-98) may be the unconscious motivation for the compressed intensity of the following three years. "To Autumn," next to the last poem Keats would ever write, reflects the calm relinquishment to natural cycle usually associated with the wisdom of old age, and remarkable in a young man of twenty-four.

In "Sleep and Poetry," Keats's scheme involves moving from the initiatory stage of the pastoral tradition--"the realm....of Flora and old Pan" (101-102)--to a more mature and "nobler" (123) stage where he envisions his poetry prepared to confront "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (124-125). He was to confront these agonies and strifes (the contraries of existence) much sooner than he had envisioned. Between the two poles of experience reflected in these poems lie the great masterpieces in which Keats contends with opposing perspectives of reality. His confrontations take a number of forms. Throughout, he never shrinks from admitting polarities. On the contrary, the open, questioning nature of his mind seems to invite them in for consideration, with varied reception. While consistently acknowledging polarities, he may delight in them, despair over them, or play them off against each other. Sometimes, as Shakespeare does in the three romantic comedies just explored, he succeeds in reconciling them. Such is the case in "Ode to Psyche." The poem, in celebrating the balance of two particular opposing attractions Keats finds equally magnetic, serves as a kind of motif for an organic

perspective shining through everything he writes.

In the poem, Keats presents a scene in which the representatives of two polarities are set in carefully delineated relationship. Drawn from the mythic world for this encounter are the goddess Psyche (in Greek, the soul, or mind), and Cupid, the god of love (the Roman version of the Greek god Eros), who in this poem may represent the life of the senses. Ideologically, the poem takes the form of an allegory, and thus the over-all design is metaphoric. As John Barnard maintains however, "the poem's effects belong not to allegory but to a symbolic and 'speculative' idiom" ("Keats's Tactile Vision" 17). The entire first stanza may be taken as the speaker's dawning realization:

O Goddess! hear these tuneless number, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
 Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
 Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
 The Winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
 I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
 In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied:
 'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
 Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
 Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
 As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:
 The winged boy I knew;
 But who was thou, O happy, happy dove?
 His Psyche true!

(1-23)

The idyll has revealed a profound insight to the speaker,

but he is not sure whether it occurred as dream or objective reality:

Surely I dreamed to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes? (5-6)

The question, indeed, seems to be an open-ended inquiry, or speculation, by the poet concerning the source of creative vision. The encounter occurs in the forest, a metaphor for the speaker's mind. The forest, in this context, suggests an undifferentiated space where the speaker find himself on an uncharted course. "I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly" may be taken as "not in rational, linear thought" or in a dream-state of amorphous contemplation. "Thoughtlessly" might also be construed as "carelessly," or "negligently," or perhaps "without concern for consequences." Both groups of meanings might be applicable: the first reflecting back upon the inquiry made by the speaker, the second might refer to a lack of consciousness of the multi-dimensional process of creativity. There indeed seems to be this implication, for when he encounters the two lovers Psyche and Cupid it is "on the sudden, fainting with surprise." Thus the speaker finds himself something of a voyeur in an unequivocally earthly paradise; what he has unwittingly come upon are two deities clasped together in a physical embrace notable for its egalitarian position: "Couched side by side."

Metaphorically, the vision he encounters is a revelation of an ideal relationship between the intellect and the senses, the mind and the body, the rational and the

emotional, spirituality and sensuality. The bower where this ideal relationship exists, nurtured and protected, is his own creative being.

While the first stanza serves as revelation, the second might be considered lamentation as the speaker acknowledges the lack of recognition and worship afforded Psyche:

"...temple hast thou none, / Nor altar heap'd with flowers, etc." (28-35). The third stanza is both an acknowledgment ("I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired") (43) and a request that his revelation might in turn inspire a poetry celebrating the reconciliation of body and mind ("So let me be thy choir, etc.") (44-49). The final stanza may be seen as a pledge that this reunion will occur first in his own mind, again likened to a forest, now enhanced, "where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain, / Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind" (52-53). "Branched thoughts" recall the implications of "thoughtlessly" and seem to indicate that now a way lies charted for him, one with multi-dimensional possibilities. The image of "branched thoughts" suggests also an organic, non-linear origin of creativity, associated with the feminine perspective. The images in this stanza attest that already the reunion of body and mind is occurring and is being duly celebrated as the forest of "branched thought" is inhabited by the organic and sensuous, denoted by "zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees" (56). The poet's haven and source of creativity ("a rosy

sanctuary") (59) will be constructed and "the wreathed trellis of a working brain" (60) will be enhanced by "buds, and bells, and stars without a name" (61). And in this bower (a "feminine" image) built for the imagination, the life of the senses will be given free access: "...a casement ope at night/ To let the warm Love in!" (66-67).

The total effect of the poem, viewed metaphorically, is one of wholeness. In his paper, "Psychic Wholeness in 'Ode to Psyche,'" Daniel Fraustino asserts that the poem "...repeals the body-mind split within modern man by pleading for wholeness within the creative personality of the poet himself" (103). Thus the poem demonstrates, on an ideological level, the reconciliation of opposing, gender-linked perspectives traditionally the hallmark of the androgynous ideal.

A most interesting aspect of this poem, however, is the more subtle workings of design transacting on another level of perception; the design emanates from the structure of the poetic language. Within the encompassing metaphor is a pattern woven of narrative and metaphoric modes, each of which Virginia Woolf believed reflected opposing ways of knowing; the finished weave ultimately suggests an androgynous consciousness.

Daniel Fraustino suggests Keats effects this same reconciliation of opposing ways of knowing in the language structure of the poem when he argues "'Ode to Psyche' counters romantic intellectualism and self-consciousness"

(103). It does this, he maintains, through a design created by the totality of sense impressions. The poem, he points out, "proliferates with images of eroticism and sexual reproduction, which form a unifying pattern that recaptures the 'wholeness of being...'" (102).

Proceeding from Fraustino's observation, one can detect the configurations of this design in "Ode to Psyche." Simply isolating these images as they appear sequentially indeed reveals a proliferation of sensual imagery that, like the afterglow of a good wine, lingers suggestively upon the reader's consciousness:

secrets	arms embraced	lulled to sleep
soft-conched ear	lips touched	rosy sanctuary
disjoined	soft handed slumber	incense sweet
amorous glow-worm	birds and bees	deepest grass
trembled blossoms	amorous glow-worm	buds,bells,stars
fragrant-eyed	virgin choir	breeding, breed
cool-rooted	delicious moan	soft delight
budded pleasant pain	casement ope	calm-breathing
zephyrs, streams	warm Love in	bedded

Isolated and compressed in this manner, the images exert a remarkable force, conveying collectively the experiences of sensuality, fecundity, unity. The recurrent nature of the imagery suggests the original spark for the poem arises from a well of sensuality, signifying sexual unity. It is both the generative source of the poem and the ultimate holistic design, the initial spark of creativity and the final cohesive work evolving in the writer's transformative hands. It signifies what Franklin Rogers, discussing origins of works of art in Painting and Poetry, calls "the archetropic

image" (169): "For the poet or novelist the self-selected point is the originating, original metaphor, the archetrope, which mates two realities to conceive a surreality" (123). The archetropic image (the same point of origin Henry James called the "germ") might be visualized as a central pulse, or flame, from which emanates a web of associations; the cumulative effect of the web is to evoke a holistic response in the reader.

On one level, the narrative presents a scene and relates the speaker's intellectual response as he acknowledges and celebrates the union of body and mind as creative source. On another level, the reader is allowed a direct experience of this "truth" by the poet's more subtle, yet insistent means of encompassing his audience in a web of recurrent sensual imagery. The compilation of sensory impressions reveals that persuasive subtlety. It is especially interesting to note that the sensuality in the figurative language abounds beyond the sexual intimacy of Psyche and Cupid, described in the first stanza. Rather, it proliferates throughout the environment of the narrative, attaching to aspects ranging from the poet's brain to the flowers and their roots. The rational mind, absorbed in the narrative, accordingly does not register as a whole the proliferation of erotic images. Rather, the accumulation of the figurative language resonates at the level of direct experience. Concrete and sensory, the language carries the message pervasively and almost

subliminally. By involving the reader so profoundly at the holistic, non-verbal level of knowing, Keats forces the reader to recreate, and thus complete, the poetic statement. John Barnard, in his paper "Keats's Tactile Vision," points out Keats's singular method of expressing an abstraction:

What is fascinating, and what refers to Keats's later poetry, is the way in which ethereal meaning is bodied in terms of sensation, and his use of a sexual metaphor to describe the commerce between mankind and some other level of knowing (7).

The effect of the proliferation of erotic imagery is further enhanced by Keats's habitual technique of entangling the senses. Barnard notes "Seeing in Keats characteristically goes along with a confusion of the senses" (1). The imagery, for instance of "hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant eyed" demands the reader summon one sense to experience another as the process immerses the reader in sound, the temperature of touch, smell, and sight. Allowing the reader a full sensory experience of the elements in this environment is foremost, Barnard notes, because of their "transferred human feelings" (19). He says the phrase, imbued with sensuality, "tactfully conveys the gratified sensuality of the sleeping lovers" (19). This confusion of the senses, according to Barnard, reflects the poet's intent to involve the reader in the "ethereal" element of the creative process:

It is intended to force us towards an intuitive grasp of the 'ethereal' nature of poetry and the imagination, to take us beyond the normal bounds of sense. The synaesthesia is not simply rhetorical in function: it attempts to embody (or in Keats's word,

'prefigure') a mode of perception going beyond the rational (the 'consequitive') to one which is based on sensation (2).

The harmonious balance of modes, evident in "Ode to Psyche" and other poems, suggests it accounts in part for Virginia Woolf's assessment of Keats's poetry as androgynous expression, since this balance figures so prominently in her own work. It is probable Woolf found substance in Coleridge's feeling that the harmonious blending of different literary forms in writing reflects a balanced or androgynous nature. In the Biographia Literaria, Coleridge elaborates on his contention that "great minds must be androgynous" when he associates that ideal state with writing, particularly poetry. A poet, in Coleridge's view, is successful in communicating his vision or experience if he is able to bring "the whole soul of man into activity" (173). The poet's power lies in "the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities." Included in this reconciliation is "the idea with the image" as well as "a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order" (173). From Coleridge, too, then, is the intimation that literature may reveal an androgynous nature not only through content but in language construct as well. The wedding of "idea with image" suggests the special perspective metaphor affords; the unity of "a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order" suggests the compression of language and feeling distinctive of poetry.

In "Ode to Psyche," Keats gives order and coherence to

his habitual tendency to ground the creative impulse in the primacy of the senses. Both the wellspring and necessary path culminating in what Harold Bloom calls the "point of epiphany" (The Visionary Company 10), is for Keats by way of the earthly, a relinquishment to the senses, mortality, natural cycle. Bloom, defining the "point of epiphany" as a unity between "a cyclical order of nature and a higher eternal order" (11), notes Keats, in "Ode to Psyche," "builds this point of epiphany within his own mind..." (11). In its embrace of the feminine view, Keats's association of the senses with epiphany is compelling evidence of an androgynous outlook. Camille Paglia confirms this idea:

Keats speaks of the heart as "the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity" [Letters. Ed. Hyder Rollins 2:103]. He gives primacy to emotional life, identified as feminine. If the heart is breastlike, the poet is a shaman with female breasts. Even read conservatively, the metaphor forces us to see a feminine heart-breast hovering just inside the male chest wall (382).

"Endymion," an earlier and lengthy poem (four thousand lines), serves as Keats's first tentative approaches to the same considerations, but without the economy and coherence notable in "Ode to Psyche" and later poems. The writing of "Endymion" was a kind of trial of discovery Keats set for himself, but which, according to Harold Bloom, was "premature" (387) in that Keats attempted such an ambitious and complex structure so early in his poetic career. (Keats did, however, gain both technical and philosophical insights from his six-month feat). However, even considering its

flaws in structure and diction, "Endymion," Bloom finds, "exposes the complete anatomy of a great mythical structure, and is our fullest revelation of the reach and power of Keats's poetic mind" (387).

The poem is a romance in which the main outline is a hero's quest, a consistent archetype throughout myth. Although the basic outline is simple, the narrative is often confusing and obscure. The purpose of Endymion's quest, as Sir Sidney Colvin expresses it, is to seek "communion with the spirit of essential Beauty in the world" (John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After-Fame 167). The object of Endymion's quest is a mysterious goddess later identified as Cynthia (and also Diana), goddess of the moon, who represents ideal beauty. The moon for Keats had a special meaning apart from popular astrology and tradition. According to Colvin, the essence Keats found in the moon was:

her transmuting and glorifying power...not her pallor but her splendor, the magic alchemy exercised by her light upon the things of earth, the heightened mystery, poetry, and...unity of aspect which she sheds upon them (166).

This attraction seems particularly significant in light of the "gender principles" and their reconciliation: the moon represents endlessly recurring cycles, process, and mortality, all aspects of the feminine perspective.

As in all hero quests, Endymion confronts obstacles and stages to be overcome before he can achieve consummation with his ideal. A realization of the value of human fellowship

and a concern reaching beyond the self figure strongly. Surmounting these, but still no nearer to the object of his quest, Endymion gives up his fruitless search for Cynthia. After great despair, he attains a measure of peace within his own mind, and surrenders to the love of an Indian Maid, who has offered enticement upon his quest. The despair engendered by his failed quest has, however, produced an insight:

I have clung
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie
Of mortals each to each....
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starv'd and died (638-641, 646-648).

The conclusion is Keats's own conclusion that will be borne out through everything he writes. Having relinquished himself to his "natural sphere," the natural world in which man must accept his own mutability, celebrated in his "Hymn to Pan" (really a poem within a poem), Endymion suddenly finds the Indian Maid transformed into Cynthia. Ultimately, he attains communion with his ideal, the essence of beauty, but only, as Bate notes, "through acceptance of the earthly." (191). Endymion's ultimate submission to natural process, represented by the feminine principle, is another indicator of Keats's androgynous view.

In the "Eve of St. Agnes," androgynous perspective is reflected in Keats's most sustained expression, thus far in his poetry, of "Negative Capability," the tolerance for

entertaining polarities without forcing resolution, as well as in the impulse to reconcile certain contraries he felt compelled to harmonize.

The poem, coming after Keats's marathon writing of *Endymion*, follows the progression of focus Keats had set for himself in "Sleep and Poetry." Although the poem is a romance and lush with the synaesthesia that is Keats's unique gift, its concerns are more profound than descriptive enticement, as important as these are in his development of themes. In "The Eve of St. Agnes," as evidenced throughout his poetry (and especially in "Ode to Psyche" and "Endymion"), "...sensuous experience is prefigurative of ultimate values in Keats's scheme of things..." (Wasserman 101).

In the medieval atmosphere of this narrative romance, Keats creates a microcosmic world of contrasts. Elements in stark opposition play off against each other to frame and heighten the central drama at the core. For centered within a multitude of contraries never attaining reconciliation, two equally diametrical forces frequently appearing in Keats's work come together in exquisite fusion. This "shifting dramatic contrast," notes Allen Danzig, "makes 'The Eve of St. Agnes' a poem of human process in a fully realized world" (ed. The Twentieth Century Interpretation of the "Eve of St. Agnes" 5).

Keats presents in dynamic contrast and interplay: the

cold of both nature and the castle with the human warmth of the young lovers; the darkness of the night and castle corridors with the roseate moonlight in Madeline's chamber; the love shared by Madeline and Porhyro with the hate between their warring families; the vitality, youth, and unity of the lovers with the frailty, advanced age, and unconnected loneliness of Angela and the Beadsman; sleep and waking, dream (or the imagination) and reality, music and silence, sensuality and spirituality.

Within the charmed fastness of Madeline's chamber, some of these qualities begin to undergo a magical synthesis. The painterly merging of color becomes symbolic of the perspectives seeking fusion in this haven temporarily restraining a harsher reality. As the virginal Madeline kneels, the "wintry moon" (218) of pure, but cold spirituality shines through the "casement high and triple-arch'd" (208) and is tempered by its colored glass "innumerable of stains and splendid dyes / As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings" (212-213). Silver moonlight and warm jeweled tones fuse on Madeline, transforming her:

Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest...(220-223).

Though touched with the spirituality of the moon, Madeline is incontestably human, evidenced by the transferral of her body's heat: her jewels, as she unclasps them, are "warmed," (228) and as she lies "trembling in her soft and

chilly nest," (235) she infuses it with the "popped warmth" (237) of her sleep. As she sleeps and then dreams in her "maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste" (187), Madeline, however, slips into a certain mortal state of spirituality, a "perfection of form" (Wasserman 108). Under the mystical influence--the "midnight charm" (282) of St. Agnes--Madeline, as she gives her trust to the legend promising a dream-vision of her future husband, moves beyond the confines of ordinary mortality, returning to pure essence and potential: "As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again" (243).

At this interlude, Porphyro spreads his lover's feast:

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet...(253-
256).

Implicit in his preparations is the first evidence of a confrontation between dream and reality. As Harold Bloom notes, Porphyro

begins to set the reality of rich objects
against the world of dream, for his is a sure
lover's instinct, underlying the psychology of the
lover's gift. Physical love is the wealth of the
world...(400).

In the feast Porphyro lays before Madeline, who dreams "In blanced linen, smooth and lavender'd," Camille Paglia finds the most compelling evidence of androgynous nature in the poem. The "food language," of this scene, she asserts, "has a stunning virtuosity" (383) as Porphyro brings from the

closet where he has been hiding:

a heap

Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
 And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
 From Fez, and spiced dainties, every one,
 From silken Samarkind to cedar'd Lebanon...
 (264-270).

Keats, Paglia declares, in concocting this banquet, qualifies
 as

the Teiresias androgyne, the nurturant male
 [who]...rules "the Eve of St. Agnes": the most
 brilliantly written part of the poem is when the
 male reverses sexual convention and feeds the
 female. Keats's language suddenly intensifies into
 a sensual cascade of ripe nouns and adjectives. The
 poem turns cornucopia" (383).

Paglia's interpretation of Keats's purpose in this lavish
 lay-out of food and language is somewhat suggestive of that
 served by the profusion of sexual imagery in "Ode to Psyche":

Keats's ingestive imagery invokes the sense of taste
 for one reason: to induce liquidity. The quick
 short consonants and oozing vowels subvert the
 reader's detachment from and control over the poem,
 artfully compelling him to salivate. I call this
 passage mouth-embowering (383).

Just as the pervasive sensual imagery in "Ode to Psyche"
 allows the reader a non-verbal, holistic experience of unity,
 here, Paglia asserts, the sensual description of food
 "...replicates in the reader's skull the poem's embowered
 bed-scene, with its luxurious ritual of male nurturance"
 (383).

In this charmed atmosphere, polarities continue to find
 resolution, or at least partial-resolution. While
 spirituality and humanity appear to fuse in Madeline, a

similar aspect of androgyny (aside from that of "nurturant male") begins to take effect in the character of Porphyro. His passion, for instance, seems to transcend mere mortality:

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose... (316-319).

The spiritual or unearthly ("ethereal," "star") alternate with the warm reality of the earthly ("flush'd," "throbbing"). Contraries, rather than remaining at an unapproachable distance from each other, reconcile within Porphyro himself.

When Porphyro, capitalizing on the legend of St. Agnes, tries to wake Madeline, dream and reality again confront each other; for a tense moment, they appear to resist resolution. Madeline has indeed been dreaming of a lover, but when she returns to partial wakefulness, the person she sees before her does not compare favorably with her dream:

Her eyes wide open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep...(298-301).

In her dream, Porphyro's eyes were "spiritual and clear," (310) and his looks "immortal" (313), while the eyes she sees on waking are "sad" (310) and his looks are "pallid, chill and drear" (311), the face of mortality itself. For this moment then, as Bloom observes, Madeline "...is caught, painfully and finely, between contending realities" (401). Yet it is Madeline who resolves the dilemma; Bloom concludes,

"Rather than reject physical reality for a dream of heaven, she invites reality to become that dream" (402). And Porphyro willingly complies. Keats tactfully and eloquently describes this synthesis of dream and reality, spirituality and mortality, offering more than one connotation for the word "solution":

Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet, --
Solution sweet... (320-322).

The sexual union of Porphyro and Madeline can be understood, Wasserman says, as "...a mystic blending of mortality and immortality, chastity and passion, the moonlight of perfect form and the ruddiness of intense experience" (120-121). At the end of the poem, Keats brings the lovers back to the reality of harsh elements and warring families (among other contraries that never find resolution), then fades them into a fine ambiguity of space and time and outcome.

A slight scepticism toward imagination's power is implicit in the partial resolution of contraries in "The Eve of St. Agnes." It grows more insistent in "Lamia," which appears to be a reversal of the views expressed in "Ode to Psyche" and "Endymion." Keats's last narrative romance, interpreted in light of the gender principles delineated by Marilyn French and Virginia Woolf further supports the view of Keats as androgynous myth-maker. In those earlier poems, polarities sought and attained synthesis. "Lamia," regarded from the perspective of androgynous expression, can be

interpreted as a dramatic portrayal of the consequences that can ensue from a failure to harmonize polarized perceptions of the world.

Keats, ever receptive to ideas he could adapt in service to his own evolving speculations on the source of creativity, took his story from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, written in 1621. Burton presents the three principal characters in the old legend with little elaboration: A young philosopher, Menippus Lycius, meets a woman who is actually a lamia (a serpent-woman) who takes him home to her house near Corinth. They live together happily for a time, then decide to marry. One of the guests at their wedding is a man called Apollonius, who, looking at the woman, sees she is actually a serpent, and her luxurious home only an illusion. When the lamia realizes she is exposed, she weeps, pleading with Apollonius to be silent. When he refuses, the lamia, her sumptuous home, and all her possessions vanish instantly (Abram 827 from Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." Part 3. Sect. 2 Memb. 1 Subs. 1).

From this simple plot, Keats constructs a lushly described environment and invests the poem with a whimsical, at times almost comic, tone. While Keats expands the complexity of all three characters (whose dramatic interactions have long been a source of puzzlement and contention among critics), Lamia's character becomes the most complex. She appears first as a "palpitating snake" (I 45),

her image strangely resplendent and unearthly, almost gaudy:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard [leopard]
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries--
(I 47-53).

The nature of this strange being is equally as complex as her appearance. Though she is "so rainbow sided", yet she is "touch'd with miseries" (I 54). She seems, simultaneously, to be "some penanced lady elf, / Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self" (I 55-56). Further, "Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!/ She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete" (I 59-60). Although she possesses some god-like abilities, she is not able to transform herself into a woman's form, which, apparently, she has had in the past. For this, she asks the god, Hermes', help: "'I was a woman, let me have once more/ A woman's shape, and charming as before'" (I 117-118). When Hermes agrees, the transformation is horrible. From her foaming mouth comes a "dew so sweet and virulent" (I 149) it withers the grass; and all her splendid coloring is changed to "A deep volcanian yellow" (I 155). At the end of this dissolution of the serpent's body, but before the woman's form materializes, "Nothing but pain and ugliness were left" (I 164).

As a woman, Lamia is equally as alluring, and equally as enigmatic. Interpreted metaphorically, her character can be taken as the imagination, projected in all its enticing

forms. The imagination, as a manifestation of the feminine principle, includes other aspects of that polarized perception. Lamia's enigmatic nature, for instance, can be viewed as an expression of both the benevolent ("inlaw") and destructive ("outlaw") aspects of the feminine principle. Lamia can be compassionate and nurturing, as when she makes a nymph invisible to save her from the amorous attentions of Hermes, and when she constructs for Lycius their "purple-lined palace of sweet sin" (I 31). But implicit in her serpent nature, her readiness to make the nymph visible again in exchange for Hermes' service to her, the sulphurous cast accompanying her transformation from serpent to woman, and her intent to sexually ensnare Lycius is the malevolence associated with the sinister, magic, and sexuality of the "outlaw" aspect. As Bloom describes her, Lamia is "simultaneously a deceptive sorceress and a beautiful innocent, a destroyer and a sensual ideal" (406).

Lamia's counterpart and nemesis representing the masculine principle is Apollonius, the elder philosopher, or "sophist" (II 291) who is the manifestation of cold, hard reason. Walfoff calls Apollonius "the agent of repudiation" (175). Lycius's character in this scheme is that of the poet or artist, who puts himself in a position of having to choose unequivocally between these extreme perceptions. In Keats's telling of the tale, Lycius has been a student of Apollonius, who, he tells Lamia, has been his "sage, my trusty guide / And good instructor" (I 375-376). But as Lamia leads Lycius

to her house, Lycius strangely shrinks into his mantle and hurries past the old man. Suddenly to Lucius, now totally enchanted by Lamia, Apollonius "to-night seems.../ The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams" (I 377).

Installed within the palace of illusion and isolated completely from the outside world, the two lovers live for a time in total sensual and sexual abandon. But when Lycius lifts his head with interest one day as he hears "a thrill of trumpets" (II 27-28) ring out from a nearby hill, it "left a thought, a buzzing in his head" (II 29). Lamia, "ever watchful, penetrant" (II 34), experiences pain, "knowing well / That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell" (II 39). Lamia, with all her powers and arts, is profoundly vulnerable. For one thing, although Lucius is completely entranced with her, that choice remains his own; he is free to reject her if he pleases.

Lycius' decision to marry her and flaunt his prize to the world reveals an unguessed side of Lycius, and perhaps might be an honest self-assessment by Keats related to his yearning for fame and his ambiguous feelings about attaining it. When Lamia weeps at his decision, Lycius grows "perverse" (II 70), redoubling his intention to "reclaim her wild and timid nature to his aim" (II 71). Lucius seems to admit to a sense of shame in the abuse of one's own gift for personal vanity:

Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self, he took delight

Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
 His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
 Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
 In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell
 (II 72).

When Lycius demands a magnificent wedding feast with many guests, Lamia pleads that one person, especially, not be invited: "'...do not bid / Old Apollonius--from him keep me hid'" (II 101). When the day arrives, the suddenly passionate voice of the narrator rings out with the sense of impending tragedy. The cry appears almost as a self-caveat by Keats to guard his innermost universe--his own creative genius and relationship to nature and love--from public exposure and possible ridicule:

O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
 The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
 And show to common eyes these secret bowers? (II
 147-149).

At the feast, Apollonius, the uninvited, appears anyway "with eye severe" (II 157). These are the eyes of science ("cold philosophy" II 230) and reason. The narrator challenges this view: "Do not all charms fly / At the mere touch of cold philosophy?" (II 229). Science, with its linear, rational, empirical approach to nature:

...will clip an Angel's wings
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine--
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
 The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade
 (II 234-238).

Under the unrelenting gaze of Apollonius, the vulnerable Lamia indeed fades and then vanishes. Lamia's existence, it appears, is realized (and destroyed) only through human

perception. And the cold, unrelenting eye of reason, Lycius' conceptual brain, has sovereignty over his creative imagination.

Lycius' death in "Lamia" is a departure in plot from Burton's tale. From it, one might surmise Keats is expressing a sense that the creative person suffers a kind of spiritual death when the extreme perceptions of the world represented by reason and the imagination are not reconciled or brought together in some harmonious fusion. Recall Virginia Woolf's speculations about the generative aspects of this fusion and the resulting limitations when there is no reconciliation:

It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine....

In the great odes, the problem of reconciling polarities becomes even more central and focused as Keats gains greater economy of expression. In regarding Keats's great odes from the perspective of androgynous expression, considering them in a limited group seems the best method to derive the most clarity for this objective. Three of the odes are particularly instructive in revealing two parallel progressions of Keats's most creative year. First, "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and "To Autumn," in that order, reveal a progression from irresolution to resolution in which Keats's "negative capability" is dramatically and compellingly illustrated. Secondly, these three odes trace

Keats's unusual and swift progression of psychological and creative maturation, noted earlier as telescoped passage. Throughout, Keats's androgynous nature becomes more prominent as he continues to refine his sense of balance between opposing gender-linked perspectives.

As evidenced by their consistent appearance, contraries and their dynamic interplay are a recurrent theme in the poetry of Keats. Upon consideration, Keats's fundamental tendency to grapple with polarities seems to be the most organic and logical outgrowth of a nature rooted in receptivity and the maintenance of an open mind. His singular nature continues to be the generating impulse of his own extraordinary "negative capability."

In the first two odes, Keats expresses conflicts between contraries insistent upon resolution, illustrated and experienced as dynamic debates. Keats, according to Bate, had come to realize

that in trying to come to terms with any large...
problem we have little choice, except to start out
by articulating it through contrasted terms--using
one contrasting thought or expression to supplement
or bring out what is disregarded by another (551).

In these odes, Keats considers the gender-related polarities he addresses in earlier poems: imagination and reason, spirituality and sensation, illusion and reality. But foremost in these poems is the conflict between relinquishment to natural process, associated with the feminine principle, and the longing for permanence associated

with the masculine principle. As Keats reconsiders these, however, he makes notable steps in the refinement of expression; the poems speak with greater economy of thought and form than the earlier poetry does, tracing a movement toward a more comprehensive androgynous perspective.

Walfoff points out: "The quest of the narrative poems may be seen transformed in the ode sequence into an extended process of symbolization" (102).

In "Ode to a Nightingale," unlike in "Ode to Psyche" and "The Eve of St. Agnes," the core of the poem is not in epiphany. Rather, it is in the inner debate and exposure of irreconcilables. In this sense, as Earl Wasserman points out, it can be considered "an inversion of the perspectives" (184) notable in "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

The poem begins with the desire for epiphany and moves toward irresolution. The speaker aspires toward that empathic loss of self where a "greeting of the spirit" (March 13, 1818, Letters) with the object of contemplation results in an experience of ecstasy. The nightingale's song serves as a fortuitous object here. Waldoff notes:

[T]he poet attributes to the symbolic object the power to dissolve his anxiety and achieve for him a completion of self in a simple climactic moment of union. His almost irresistible longing is for total resolution and unity (128).

From the declaration "being too happy in thy happiness" (6), it appears this empathic meeting with pure essence has been fully realized. Countering this appearance of empathy, however, is the note on which the poem begins: "My heart

aches, and a drowsy numbness pains my sense" (1), and the fact that the next four stanzas trace the search to restore that idealized capacity of remaining human, yet miraculously escaping mutability. The scepticism implied in "The Eve of St. Agnes" becomes manifest here in a more direct expression of two irreconcilable domains. The movement toward irresolution unfolds by free association--the "natural" logic of the mind as it moves, unimpeded but assisted by "negative capability," to its destined conclusion. The poem, Bate says, evolves into "a drama of symbolic debate" (507). The dialectic is mounted between two opposing perspectives: submission to natural process, associated with the feminine principle, and the "massive protest against mortality" (507) associated with the masculine principle.

The final thought at the end of each stanza suggests the next freely-associated thought, giving the poem the form of an organically evolving inner debate. At the end of the first stanza, "Full-throated ease" (10), following the disclosure of pain, seems to flow into the impassioned longing for a wine that has distilled into its essence the sensual ease and sun-drenched charm of Provence, a wine "Tasting of Flora and the country green,/ Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth" (13-14), together with psychological transport and forgetfulness. As the second stanza ends, "And with thee fade away into the forest dim" (20), it brings to the speaker's mind the dark view of the

world's unfathomable injustices he longs to escape:

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan:
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow...
 (23-27).

The movement from the third to the fourth stanza is less associative as the poet suddenly recalls the desire to join the nightingale, rejecting wine as a means of transport and resorting to the force of his own imagination:

Away! Away! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Baccus and his pards, [leopards]
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards...
 (31-34).

The image of the brain that "perplexes and retards" intimates the conceptual mind's growing scepticism of the imagination's power to effect the longed for reunion with essence.

The imagination is successful to a point; the speaker is transported to a place of momentary surcease from the ravages of process. But once in this nurturing and maternal darkness ["Already with thee! Tender is the night" (35)] the poet's vision disappears; in stanza six his receptivity is acutely focused and concentrated into one sensory mode: "Darkling, I listen" (51). What he "hears" is his own psychological truth toward which this avenue of free association has been leading. The speaker recalls an often felt wish for death: "for many a time / I have been half in love with easeful Death" (51-52). The "embalmed" (43) darkness of this region lends to the senses the experience of "easeful" death: "Seems

it rich to die" (55). Yet, it is at this point that Keats's willingness, supported by "negative capability," to pursue an argument to its natural conclusion brings him to the central debate. An impasse lies before him: while death would definitely end the "weariness, fever and fret" of human existence, it would also necessarily halt with irrevocable finality all sensation, which for Keats is the avenue to epiphany. The thought comes as an abrupt realization at the end of the sixth stanza, once his mind moves beyond the imagined luxury of the moment of death. The nightingale would continue singing, but his own responsiveness would correspond to a clump of dirt:

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain -
To thy high requiem become a sod (59-60).

The introduction of the word "forlorn" (70) in the speaker's reverie at the end of the seventh stanza recalls him to habitual consciousness from this transitory state where ordinary time and process only appear momentarily arrested. The irresolution the poem proceeds toward, concludes Helen Vendler, is ultimately the choice "between unhappy consciousness and the unconsciousness of death" (88).

Although "Ode to a Nightingale" illustrates this debate between irreconcilables, and the speaker recognizes he "must here chose annihilation or a return to life" (Vendler 93), Keats's choice was for life, with all its sorrows. This choice comes through with great pathos in his letter to his friend, Charles Brown, written (near September 28, 1820)

while he was fatally ill and on the boat bound for Italy where he would die the following year of tuberculosis:

I wish for death every day and night...and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and Sea, weakness and decline, are great seperators [sic], but death is the great divorcer for ever."

(Letters. Ed. Maurice Buxton Forman, 11 564)

As the nightingale's song moves farther and farther away until it is "buried deep" (77) in the next valley, it echoes the distance now intervening between the poet and the hope that his longing to fix the flux of experience will ever be reconciled with natural oblivion. The vacuum remaining compels the speaker to raise a final question, Keats's habitual inquiry into the nature of the creative act, reinforcing the irresolution that has been this poem's destined conclusion.

Was it a vision, or a waking dream:

Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep? (79-80).

Is epiphany a dream, and the return to normal reality an awakening, or is the peak experience a fleeting glimpse of "true" reality, and the return only the habitual "sleep" of ordinary consciousness?--the doors of perception closed fast once again.

The next of Keats's poems in this progression, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," seems to invite the reader to circle round and round it as Keats must have done with the urn molded by his imagination. Although, as one critic has pointed, out, "it has become one of our most interrogated poems" (Spiller 53), interrogating it from the present limited vantage point (that

is, as an expression of Keats's androgynous perspective), reflects simply one more facet of its seemingly endless cache of richness.

In his progression toward a unity of consciousness, Keats moves from fortuitous natural event (the nightingale's song) to classical art as an object for contemplation. For Keats, these serve as a creative means to satisfy his impulse to confront, express, clarify, and reconcile polarities.

Further, the effort is continuous; Bate notes that Keats

thought by contrasts; and whatever was excluded by the tone and limitations of one work often began to clamor, to his instinctive sympathies, for equal justice, equal expression (626).

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" represents a movement away from what Waldoff terms "the bold explorative, natural impulse in 'Ode to a Nightingale'" toward a vision expressed through a more disciplined craft (132). With the gradual elimination of the poet's voice, the poem also signals a movement away from the subjectivity notable in "Ode to a Nightingale," and toward the supreme objectivity achieved in "To Autumn." In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats's choice of an ancient urn as an object for contemplation is especially inspired. Its "interrogations" of over a century have borne this out. The urn's form lends the poem and its appreciation a multiplicity of perceptions, especially significant in the context of androgynous expression. An intricate weave of "feminine" and "masculine" perspectives is yet another aspect of its art. Its singularity of form, suggests Franklin Rogers, is the

originating "visual metaphor:...the form of a living, human bride, 'still unravished,' 'warm and still to be enjoy'd,'" superimposed upon the "' silent form' of an urn" (188). The encompassing form allows the reader a unity of experience Rogers describes as "volumetric" (194) in that it leaves

the alert reader no choice but to accept the total range of significance within the individual signs in a simultaneity of apprehension: the reading of the poem advances not on various levels at once but rather in several dimensions at once (194).

The dialectic proceeds within the encompassing metaphor of urn-bride, connoting both contrast and connection between art and life, permanence and mutability, silence and communication, imagination and reality, truth and beauty,

The urn and its circular scene provide an opportunity to move in and closely examine arrested process and its implications, both positive and negative. Contemplating the urn's enduring form and its equally inspired scene vicariously fulfills for both poet and audience the longing to stop process, to fix the flux of the ever-recurring cycle of birth, growth, decline, and death. Keats meditates on the scene as an illustration of ideal permanence, giving its positive aspects full consideration. Yet, with the inspired choice of "tale" for the scene (unconsummated sexual pursuit), Keats creates an extraordinary forum on which to present the opposing view.

Through an intricate weave of images and diction in

Stanza two, Keats presents a swiftly alternating dialectic between the main themes of these odes: the conflict between the masculine principle's desire for ideal permanence and the feminine principle's relinquishment to natural process and mutability (note the ambiguity implicit in "canst not," chosen instead of "need not," for example):

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal--yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou has not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! (15-20).

By way of the scene on the urn, Keats presents the essential argument between "transient actuality and ideal permanence" (Bate 111): While the characters are never subjected to the ills man is heir to, yet their potential must remain forever unfulfilled, never to be allowed the sensual and spiritual joys inherent in the experience of living; the scene will forever remain a "Cold Pastoral" (45). Life, on the other hand, although it possesses the potential for great pleasure, is yet subject to great pain; it is transient and its inevitable end is death.

Silence and communication in the poem illustrate an additional contrast between "masculine" and "feminine" ways of viewing reality, ultimately providing the means for resolving the conflict the urn presents. When the speaker views the urn as "sylvan historian," his questions in the first and fourth stanzas are in the domain of the masculine principle--temporal, and concerned with sequence and fact:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? etc.
 (1-10, 31-37).

To these questions the urn gives no reply. It is only when the speaker views the urn and its implications holistically (in Virginia Woolf's terms, "apprehends the unity of experience"), that communication results. With the speaker's acknowledgment of the urn's ability to transform perspective from the linear to the comprehensive--

"Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity...(44-45)

--the urn, as Vendler points out, "...is astonishingly, no longer silent..." (132). In becoming "oracular" (Vendler 133), the urn announces a reconciliation between Keats's contending polarities. It is best to take the urn's message of "Beauty is Truth," Truth Beauty" not as an aphorism of abstract concepts (Bate says, "Keats never comes close to anything as bald as the simple equation of these two abstractions") (517), but rather as a premise about perception. Regarded in that context, it describes the ability to shift the perceptual focus from the "masculine" domain of objective thought (rational, factual, sequential), to the "feminine" domain of imagination (aesthetic, subjective, concerned with sensation) when the imagination as well as the cognitive faculty is engaged in contemplating an object. Helen Vendler describes this unity of perspective the oracular urn expresses:

It says "Beauty is Truth" when we are looking at it with the eyes of sensation, seeing its beautiful forms as actual people, alive and active. It says "Truth is Beauty" when we are looking at it with the eyes of thought, seeing it as the mind must see it, as a marble inscribed by intentionality, the true made beautiful by form (133).

The reconciliation of gender-linked contraries afforded by this perceptual shift reflects, for Keats, a further step in the refinement of thought, craft, and androgynous expression.

Keats's last ode, "To Autumn," in its maturity of outlook and supreme objectivity, marks the final step of the movement traced in these three odes, Keats's progression toward a unified consciousness. The poem, as Paglia says, is "a series of lush holograms" (382) that proceeds by a languorous, almost imperceptible movement toward serene resolution. Keats draws contraries into harmonious union (or perhaps reunion) without employing either the associative dialectic leading to irresolution in "Ode to a Nightingale" or the dynamic polemic of "Ode on a Grecian Urn." The poet's voice has disappeared altogether in the poem's luxuriant movement. The communication is now a private one; it "flows between the poet and the Season and we are absorbed in the flow" (Vendler 246). Keats achieves this refinement of thought and form, Vendler notes, by eliminating "the language of explanation, justification, and philosophizing" (277), and simply allowing the images to articulate the thought.

The almost imperceptible movement toward the poem's resolution progresses by implication from active ripening, in

the first stanza, to maturity and gentle decline in the second, to serene acceptance in the third. The ripeness achieved in the first stanza is a triumph of sensory evocation. The potential realized here is the flowering and bearing never to be allowed fulfillment on the urn. Keats brings this ripeness into being, says Paglia, by "a cinema of kinesthesia, the Dionysian feelies.... Words bubble with nascence. Language itself is in advanced pregnancy" (382). The verbs in this stanza: "load," "bless," "bend," "fill," "swell," "plump," "set budding," "o'er-brimm'd," (3-11), reproduce this abundance of fruition.

The barely perceivable transformation of the potent, but amorphous "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" (1) of the first stanza into the human-like presence of mellow indolence in the second turns on the question "Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?" (12). If the sensual immersion in the first stanza somehow averts the mind from noticing a parallel with human process, the question insures the linkage will occur in the second, for it echoes one's first intimation of personal mortality. Inherent in this ode is the view that the impulse sparking the green vitality and fecundity of life is the same one causing it to burn to extinction. Keats, says Helen Vendler, takes "this absolution of life to heart, making his Autumn the voluntary agent of her own dissolution..."(237). The same inescapable irony was later to become a compelling central vein in the poetry of Dylan Thomas:

While the first stanza expresses Keats's androgynous perspective in its embrace of the "feminine" valuing of sensation over thought, the second, in its intimation of languorous decline, reflects the "feminine" submission to natural process. Paglia draws attention to the tone permeating these movements:

The images of the second stanza resonate with these rhythms:
"sitting careless on a granary floor / Thy hair uplifted by
the winnowing wind" (14-15); "on a half-reaped furrow sound
asleep / Drows'd with the fume of poppies" (16-17); "...with
patient look / Thou watches the last oozings hours by hours"
(21-22).

The indolence expressed here recalls Keats's notion of the flower (and the mind) as receptive, a word he substituted for indolence and incorporated into his own poetic creed. Helen Vendler notes his acknowledgment of this aspect of creativity:

The renaming of indolence as receptivity enables Keats...to integrate the "feminine" (or the languorous or the drowsy) into himself, and dismiss the too strenuous, masculine heroic image of self

and art.... In consequence the receptive sexual basis of creativity is gratefully admitted and Thought (as Apollo) and Sensation (as Earth) are now conceived as a golden pair, inseparable (285).

In the last stanza, Keats again uses a question to signal a final subtle turning: "Where are the songs of spring? Ay where are they?" (23). Although directed toward the season itself, the question draws in its human audience to ponder the implications of passage: remembrance, regret, grief. The next line, "Think not of them, thou hast thy music too," (24) recalls the similar "Yet do not grieve" ("Urn" 18) from the previous poem, the note of consolation underscoring androgynous vision in Keats, the empathic, nurturant male.

In the final stanza, the human-like presence is gone and the intimation of death becomes implicit in the images of actuality. Rather than an impassioned "massive protest" against process, or the "aching for wings" (Vendler 278) to escape it, the intimation of death is exquisitely subtle. The images, "soft-dying day" (25), "in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn" (27), allow naturalistic associations with grief; the seemingly oxymoronic image "full-grown lambs" (30) suggests completion of a particular cycle.

The closing lines of the poem fully summon the experience of actuality: the hedge-cricket simply sing; the robin whistles. The image of the "gathering swallows" (33), while implying closure of either day or season or life, also infers omission of an agent: spontaneous, naturally occurring, "unsponsored, free..." as Wallace Stevens would later

describe the same view in "Sunday Morning" (605).

Keats, concurs Bush,

does not evade or challenge actuality; he achieves by implication, 'the top of sovereignty,' the will to neither strive nor cry, the power to see and accept life as it is, a perpetual process of ripening, decay, and death (178).

Keats's own creed of "Negative Capability," the willingness to tolerate paradox, ultimately allows him to arrive at this serene resolution of contraries: the mature acceptance of natural process as a necessary condition for the fruition of potential, as inherent in mortality as death is.

Even though there remains the haunting question of what Keats would have accomplished had he lived longer, still, there is a certain satisfying sense of completion in "To Autumn" and its serene resolution of contraries. The poem's calm relinquishment to natural cycle reflects completion of at least one "pattern of progressive refinement" not only in Keats's maturation of the creative process but in his quest for a unified consciousness as well.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis has been to provide support for Virginia Woolf's assertion in "A Room Of One's Own" that Shakespeare and Keats manifest an androgynous perspective in their works. The process of achieving that goal involved exploring selected works of each writer for signs of androgynous expression. The stimulus for the exploration has been Woolf's image of the creative mind, an image stimulated in turn by Coleridge's view that "a great mind must be androgynous."

Woolf's metaphor of a taxi, into which a young woman and a young man enter and glide smoothly away, suggests that androgyny (and by extension, androgynous expression), is some harmonious blending of qualities perceived as "feminine" and "masculine." To form a clear picture of how Shakespeare and Keats express this harmonious blend first required an exploration of historical distinctions between "feminine" and "masculine" qualities.

In her essay, Woolf describes androgyny simply as "man-womanly," a description prompting a search for a more precise and detailed definition. Marilyn French's delineation of the "gender principles," which provides a scholarly and detailed classification of these qualities, became an invaluable aid in tracing androgynous expression. Further research revealed Nancy Bazin's catalogue of the gender-

linked attributes Virginia Woolf recognized in the works of other writers and explored in her own work. Woolf's intuitively-derived catalogue is remarkably similar to French's scholarly-derived distinctions. Together, in presenting gender-linked opposing perspectives as profound differences in viewing reality, the two catalogues have served as an excellent guide for identifying and gauging androgynous expression in literature.

Secondly, discovering androgynous expression in Shakespeare and Keats required an exploration of the historical roots of androgyny. The exploration revealed androgyny as an elusive ideal pursued throughout myth and literature; the ideal embraces the premise that the disparate views represented by the two genders once existed in a perfect and harmonious balance in mankind. The impulse to give substance to the androgynous ideal (in society's institutions as well as in myth and literature) reflects the human desire to regain that unity. In this thesis, the ancient impulse to reconcile the gender principles and thereby restore man's original unity of consciousness has been represented as androgynous expression.

According to Marilyn French, Shakespeare represents each of the gender principles, together with the androgynous ideal (and its failure) in many forms throughout his drama. This study, however, concentrates on how Shakespeare uses transformation of character to illustrate a reconciliation of the gender principles. The study locates Shakespeare's

personification of the "sublime androgyne" in his three romantic comedies within a long tradition of drama ranging from Euripides' depiction of Dionysus in the Bacchae to the twentieth century film "Tootsie." The central aim in studying the three comedies has been to illustrate how Shakespeare effects a reconciliation of the gender principles by utilizing the dramatic device of opposite-sex disguise as a vehicle for synthesis and transformation. Rosalind, Viola, and Portia each undergo transformations resulting in an amplification of effectiveness. In their pluck and ingenuity, as each moves toward a unified consciousness, Shakespeare's three women mirror the spirit of the Greek goddess Athena who, Camille Paglia says, "symbolizes the resourceful, adaptive mind, the ability to invent, plan, conspire, cope, and survive" (85).

Keats, like Shakespeare, exhibits a distinct preoccupation with opposing ways of viewing reality. His poetry reflects a dominant impulse to both recognize and grapple with the tensions between polarized perceptions and to seek a balance between them; the balance he strikes is in accordance with his own search for a unity of consciousness: at times only irresolution results, at other times Keats achieves amicable or even supreme reconciliation among contraries. Leon Waldoff's estimation of Keats's urge toward a unity of consciousness supports this conclusion:

The ideal condition toward which Keats always strives because it is his ideal, is one in which

mortal and immortal, dynamism and stasis, the Dionysian and the Apollonian, beauty and truth, are one (180).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Keats's inherent androgynous perspective lies in his consistent use of sexual union as a metaphor for the creative mind. That metaphor not only grounds the path to epiphany in the life of the senses (identified with the feminine principle), it reaffirms the impulse toward androgyny: the harmonious balance and reconciliation of polarized qualities identified historically as "masculine" and "feminine." The union of these qualities form a necessary basis for the fecundity of the creative spirit. Virginia Woolf's perception of the creative mind is a testament to that harmonious joining:

It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine....

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