THE APOCALYPTIC MARRIAGE: EROS AND AGAPE
IN KEATS'S THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

THESIS

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This analysis of Keats's poem proffers evidence and arguments to support the contention that The Eve of St. Agnes presents allegorically the poet's speculations regarding the relationship between eros and agape, speculations which include a sharp criticism of Christianity and a model for a new, more "humanistic" system of salvation. The union of Madeline and Porphyro symbolizes the reconciliation of the two opposing types of love in an apocalyptic marriage styled on the Biblical union of Christ and the Church. The irony inherent in the poem arises from Keats's use of Christian myths, symbols, and sacraments to accomplish this purpose.
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INTRODUCTION

In his copy of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Keats jotted the following comments in the margin beside a description of the various objects of human love:

Here is the old plague spot: the pestilence, the raw scrofula. I mean that there is nothing disgraces me in my own eyes so much as being one of a race of eyes, nose and mouth beings in a planet called the earth who all from Plato to Wesley have always mingled goatish, winnyish, lustful love with the abstract adoration of the deity. I don't understand Greek—is the Love of God and the Love of Women expressed by the same word in Greek? I hope my little mind is wrong—if not I could—[and on the next page] Hm! I see how they endeavor to divide—but there appears to be a horrid relationship. (Forman 3: 268)

It is this "horrid relationship" between the love of God (agape) and human love (eros) that forms the central conflict and is the reason for being of Keats's most sensual and religious poem—*The Eve of St. Agnes*.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that *The Eve of St. Agnes* presents allegorically Keats's speculations regarding the relationship between eros and agape, speculations which include a sharp criticism of Christianity and a model for a new, more humanistic system of salvation. The union of Madeline and Porphyro symbolizes the rapprochment of the two opposing types of love in an apocalyptic marriage styled on the Biblical union of Christ.
and the Church. The irony inherent in the poem arises from Keats's use of Christian myths, symbols, and sacraments to accomplish this purpose.

I do not claim that the speculations in *The Eve of St. Agnes* represent the sum of Keats's attitudes toward sexual love, Christianity, or secularized theology; Keats scholars acknowledge that the year 1819 was one of rapid and remarkable psychological and artistic growth for the poet, and critics are with good reason quite cautious about making such definitive claims. Much of Keats's best work during that year appears to be an attempt to dramatize in verse inner conflicts—philosophical, theological, personal—that arose as he matured and began to apply the "thinking principle" (Kern 172). Thus, the disparate, often contradictory ideas expressed in the poems form no consistent, systematic approach to these conflicts. *The Eve of St. Agnes* records, I think, a musing or speculation on the part of the poet, one which may or may not have held any permanent truth for him.

I will also present arguments against certain prevailing critical assumptions about Keats's place among his contemporaries. I intend to show that *The Eve of St. Agnes* has the same status as the *Hyperion* fragment—as a prophetic work that presents a vision of social change. The critical consensus that places Keats outside the ranks of the mainstream Romantics has underplayed this social
concern, tending rather to classify Keats as primarily an aesthete, a sensualist, or a realist whose ideas are more "modern" than those of his contemporaries.

Finally, I will show the relationship between *The Eve of St. Agnes* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* for the purpose of elaborating Keats's ironic manipulation of traditional allegorical techniques. By juxtaposing certain passages from Spenser with parallel sections of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, I will show how Keats's work forms an ironic reversal of the Christian ideas set out by Spenser.

My approach to and interpretation of *The Eve of St. Agnes* is based on several fundamental assumptions which, because they are disputed among Keats scholars, bear stating at the outset of this essay. First of these is that *The Eve of St. Agnes* is an allegory, so that all elements of the action, characterization, setting, and imagery must be interpreted with a greater emphasis on their symbolic meaning and less insistence on their mimetic integrity. Although it is an allegory, the poem is not didactic; Keats states frequently in his letters that he deplores poetry that has a "palpable design" upon the reader (*Letters* 1: 224), and there is no evidence of any preaching or moralizing in this work. This is not to say, however, that the narrative is purposeless or a mere demonstration of Keats's descriptive powers. Since 1950 most critics have rejected this early critical view of *The Eve of St. Agnes*,...
recognizing its rich interpretive possibilities (Sperry 199). Neither is it anti-romantic or a parody on medieval imitations. Finally, the religious criticism implicit in The Eve of St. Agnes is consonant with those attitudes Keats expresses in the letters and which can be surmised from his other poems.

The collected letters of Keats and his circle of friends and fellow men of letters have been both a boon and a bane to Keats scholars. They are fascinating personal revelations that provide a wealth of biographical detail and a glimpse of Keats's astonishingly rapid development as a poet. Nearly all critics rely on them to some extent. I have used them here with reserve for two main reasons. First, the letters indicate that Keats's attitude toward poetry—indeed, his whole world view—was evolving dramatically during the period immediately before and after the composition of The Eve of St. Agnes. These changes are observable, but not always consistent in the letters he wrote to his several correspondents. Thus, any critic who relies heavily on the letters to support an interpretation of a poem must also demonstrate a degree of consistency in the private writings as well.

The other problem I find with the letters is that of obscurity. With few exceptions (the famous "vale of soul-making" letter is one of these), Keats writes with an economy of words and a disregard for punctuation and grammar
that make interpreting the letters often more difficult than interpreting the poetry, particularly when he is writing rapidly about an important idea. This is further complicated by the fact that many of his comments are predicated on conversations or letters of which modern scholars have no knowledge.

My practice, therefore, is to use only those passages which seem to reflect Keats's ideas about poetic methods and religion with some clarity and consistency and which agree with the poetic practices and religious attitudes we can observe in his work. I have also limited most of these references to letters written within a few months of the composition of *The Eve of St. Agnes* (January 1819) and the revision in September 1819. Although many critics make much of the death of Keats's brother Tom (December 1, 1818) and the poet's engagement to Fanny Brawne a few weeks later, I have resisted incorporating speculations as to the impact these events may have had on *The Eve of St. Agnes* on the grounds that such biographical data often lead to highly conjectural approaches to the poetry.

In order to begin, it is essential to reconstruct as fully as possible the poem as Keats intended for it to be published. To that end, the first chapter of the essay is devoted to a brief history of the text itself. The second chapter concerns Keats's poetic method. The balance of the paper concerns my explication of *The Eve of St. Agnes*. 
CHAPTER I

THE TEXT OF THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

While most critics recognize the erotic nature of The Eve of St. Agnes, they tend to brush aside the pervasive religious imagery. Gail M. Gibson has commented on this tendency and remarks that it is "less a measure of Keats's success--or of his failure--than a measure of the widespread critical assumption that Christian ideas and language have no relevance to Keats's poetry" (39). It is only within the last ten years that serious attention has been given to Keats's spirituality (Jordan 692), a neglect that is due most likely to Keats's letters which indicate a "rejection of traditional Christian religion" (Gibson 39). But the persistent refusal of critics to acknowledge the religious content of the poem may also arise from the fact that much of this imagery was weakened by Keats's publishers who censored several "objectionable" phrases that originally provided a Christian counterweight to the eroticism. The Eve of St. Agnes as it was printed in Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and Other Poems in June 1820 does not have the balance of religious and erotic imagery that Keats himself constructed in 1819.

The Eve of St. Agnes presents some thorny textual
problems for scholars since there are multiple discrepancies among the four extant manuscripts and the text as it appears in the 1820 volume. In *The Texts of Keats's Poems*, Jack Stillinger reconstructs the history of the text from the evidence in the manuscripts and the letters. Apparently, Richard Woodhouse, an associate of Keats's publishers Taylor and Hessey, transcribed Keats's first draft in April 1819 and later made a second copy for himself from that transcription. Keats revised the poem in September 1819 and had a fair copy made which was transcribed by his brother George in January 1820 and used by Woodhouse. This fair copy has not been found, nor have any copies Woodhouse may have made after the poem was revised by Keats in September; however, Woodhouse did enter several corrections and alterations on his initial transcription, changes which were apparently made after seeing the fair copy (*Texts* 214-19).

The matter is further complicated by the fact that Keats (apparently with great frustration and reluctance) gave final editorial authority to his publishers after a vehement dispute with Woodhouse over the revision of the stanza describing the consummation scene and the inclusion of an additional stanza explaining the ritual feast (see below). Woodhouse's oft-cited letter of 19, 20 September, 1819 to John Taylor records this argument and bears quoting here since it contains valuable information regarding Keats's intentions for his poem:
He had the Eve of St A. copied fair: He has made trifling alterations, inserted an additional stanza early in the poem to make the legend more intelligible, and correspondent with what afterwards takes place, particularly with respect to the supper & the playing on the Lute.--he retains the name of Porphyro--has altered the last 3 lines to leave on the reader a sense of pettish disgust, by bringing Old Angela in (only) dead stiff & ugly.--He says he likes that the poem should leave off with this Change of Sentiment--it was what he aimed at, & was glad to find from my objections to it that he had succeeded. . . . There was another alteration, which I abused for "a full hour by the Temple clock." You know if a thing has a decent side, I generally look no further--As the Poem was orig[inall]y written, we innocent ones (ladies & myself) might very well have supposed that Porphyro, when acquainted with madeline's love for him, & when "he arose, Etherial flush[e]d &c &c (turn to it) set himself at once to persuade her to go off with him, & succeeded & went over the "Dartmoor black" (now changed for some other place) to be married, in right honest chaste & sober wise. But, as it is now altered, as soon as M. has confessed her love, P. <instead> winds by degrees his arm round her, presses breast to breast, and acts all the acts of a bona fide husband, while she fancies she is only playing the part of a Wife in a dream. This alteration is of about 3 stanzas; and tho' there are no improper expressions but all is left to inference, and tho' profanely speaking, the Interest on the reader's imagination is greatly heightened, yet I do apprehend it will render the poem unfit for ladies, & indeed scarcely to be mentioned to them among the "things that are."--He says he does not want ladies to read his poetry: that he writes for men--& that if in the former poem there was an opening for doubt what took place, it was his fault for not writing clearly & comprehensibly--that he sh[oul]d despise a man who would be such an eunuch in sentiment as to leave a <Girl> maid, with that Character about her, in such a situation: & sho[ul]d despise himself to write about it &c &c &c . . . (Letters 2: 162-63).

Taylor was equally shocked by the revised stanzas and incensed at Keats's adamant refusal to restore the carefully veiled description as it was originally written (11 314-322 in the 1820 published version).
on 25 September, Taylor writes:

I don't know how the Meaning of the new Stanzas is wrapped up, but I will not be accessory (I can answer also for H[essey] I think) towards publishing any thing which can only be read by Men, since even on their Minds a bad Effect must follow the Encouragement of those Thoughts which cannot be rased [sic] without Impropriety--If it was so natural a process in Keats's Mind to carry on the Train of his Story in the way he has done, that he could not write decently, if he had that Disease of the Mind which renders the perception too dull to discover Right from Wrong in Matters of moral Taste, I should object equally then [referring to the publication of Endymion] as now to the Sanctioning of the Infirmitiy by an act of cool Encouragement on my part . . . Therefore my dear Rich[ar]d if he will not so far concede to my Wishes as to leave the passage as it originally stood, I must be content to admire his Poems with some other Imprint, & in so doing I can reap as much Delight from the Perusal of them as if they were our own property, without having the disquieting Consideration attached to them of our approving, by the "Imprimatur," those Parts which are unfit for publication. (Letters 2: 182-83)

Keats capitulated to the publisher's threat, and Woodhouse notes on his revised transcript of the original poem (revisions gleaned from the missing fair copy together with, presumably, such alterations as he and the publishers saw fit and perhaps instructions from Keats himself) that "'K. left it to his Publishers to adopt which [readings] they pleased, & to revise the Whole'" (Texts 219).

Until and unless the missing fair copy surfaces, critics and scholars are faced with the difficult decision of which version of The Eve of St. Agnes best represents the poem as Keats intended it to be published. That critical alterations were forced on the poet against his wishes is evident; Stillinger argues convincingly that "the 1820 text
does not, even theoretically, represent Keats's final intentions in the poem" (Texts 219) and includes in his annotated edition of the complete poems two passages from Woodhouse's revised transcription. These include a stanza to be inserted between 6 and 7 of the 1820 version:

'Twas said her future lord would there appear
Offering, as sacrifice--all in the dream--
Delicious food, even to her lips brought near,
Viands, and wine, and fruit, and sugar'd cream,
To touch her palate with the fine extreme
Of relish: then soft music heard, and then
More pleasures follow'd in a dizzy stream
Palpable almost: then to wake again
Warm in the virgin morn, no weeping Magdalen. (Poems 456)

and the following substitution for lines 314-322 of the published text:

See, while she speaks his arms encroaching slow,
Have zoned her, heart to heart,--loud, loud the dark winds blow!

For on the midnight came a tempest fell;
More sooth, for that his quick rejoinder flows
Into her burning ear: and still the spell
Unbroken guards her in serene repose.
With her wild dream he mingled, as a rose
Marrieth its odour to a violet.
Still, still she dreams, louder the frost wind blows,
(Poems 457).

The significance of these two passages will be apparent to even casual readers: as Woodhouse notes, the one clarifies the purpose of the feast which in the 1820 version is unexplained; the other is more explicit with regard to Madeline's dream state and the fact that a sexual consummation does take place.

M. R. Ridley argues for the complete transcript made by George Keats from the fair copy since it reflects Keats's
September, 1819 revisions but not those alterations forced upon the poet by the publishers (180). This seems the more convincing argument since, according to Woodhouse, Keats wanted *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *Lamia* published together as early as mid-September (*Letters* 2: 162); the fair copy most likely was made for that purpose and would, therefore, have represented what Keats considered to be the final version of the poem. Although Stillinger states that "George's transcript of *The Eve of St. Agnes* represents the latest recoverable state of the poem before that of 1820" (*Texts* 24), the emendations noted above do not reflect all the variances between the published poem and the George Keats version.

Among those expurgations made by the self-appointed board of censors are several distinctly Biblical allusions (besides the reference to Mary Magdalen, omitted when the original draft version of the consummation scene was restored by Taylor). These deletions include "Mercy Jesu!" (now "Mercy, Porphyro!" at line 98); "To venture so about these thorny ways/ A tempting Be'lzubub:" (now "To venture so: it fills me with amaze/ To see thee, Porphyro!" at lines 122-23); "O christ, I deem" (now "Go, go!--I deem" at line 143); and "by the great St. Paul" (now "by all saints I swear," at line 145). Whether these substitutions were made in order to avoid offending the religious sensibilities of the public or to render the direct Christian references more
oblique, the alterations weaken the effectiveness of Keats's pointed imagery. Because I think several of these variances between the published version of The Eve of St. Agnes and the George Keats transcript (hereafter GK) are significant to the interpretation of the poem, I have used GK as it appears in Ridley, pages 180-90 (reprinted in full in the Appendix) as a supplement to Stillinger's Complete Poems.

Identifying the definitive text is no less important to scholarly inquiry than is identifying the poetic mode of a work. Here again, Keats scholars are of a divided mind. Is The Eve of St. Agnes to be read literally as an intense, erotic love story? Or is it an allegory? If so, what are its agents, and what do they represent? Is the poem a romance? Or is it an ironic parody on romance? Before moving on to a full explication of the poem, the mode in which it is written must be established. To that end the next chapter is devoted.
CHAPTER II

KEATS AND IRONIC ALLEGORY

In January 1819, Keats went to Chichester to visit with friends (Letters 2: 58n). He probably left behind Hyperion. After working on his long-planned epic for some three months, the poet was having trouble getting on with it (2: 12, 18, 62). He did plan to try some writing, however, and took with him to Chichester some "thin paper"; during the last two weeks of January when "Nothing worth speaking of happened," Keats "wrote on it a little Poem call'd 'St. Agnes Eve'" (2: 58). This cryptic account of the circumstances surrounding the poem's composition is drawn from Keats's letters, and his biographers have mustered little hard evidence to enlarge upon it. 7

Because it is known that in early 1819 Keats had temporarily slowed (if not stopped altogether) work on Hyperion (Bate 436), some critics have assumed that The Eve of St. Agnes was a diversion for the poet, a retreat into the faery world of Spenser where the epic pressures of the "large poem" (as Keats referred to Hyperion) could be crowded out by the charm of fantasy. The radical difference in mode between the two poems indicates to these critics Keats's need to bury himself in a subject and form that were
in no way like those of Hyperion. These assumptions are unfounded and tend to color the exegeses of those critics who dismiss or deny its allegorical elements. To treat the poem as a "mere exercise" (Bate 452) implies that the subject and theme are somehow of less import, or at least less mentally stressful than those of Hyperion. This assumption is unfounded and based more on conjecture from Keats's biography than on the text of the poem itself. I see no basis for assuming that because The Eve of St. Agnes was written before Hyperion was finally abandoned its content must be considered less significant than that of the epic fragment, nor that its ironies render it necessarily non-allegorical. It is just as likely that Keats was inspired to write about a subject that did not fit his plan for Hyperion and warranted treatment in a separate work in a different form.

I agree that Keats's choice of form is, as many critics suggest, important to the interpretation of the poem; however, I think the importance lies in the fact that Keats's poem is deliberately imitating Spenser's The Faerie Queene in metrical and stanzaic form, tone, setting, and allegorical method. And the ironies in The Eve of St. Agnes are directed not at romance itself (Kern 172), but at the religious themes of Spenser and his successors who were similarly concerned with didactic, Christian allegories.

Several similarities between Spenser's Faerie Queene
and *The Eve of St. Agnes* suggest that the latter is an imitation of Spenserian allegory—the rich ornament, medievalism, the vague "faery" setting, and religious aura are in the manner of Spenser's poem. Even more important are the technical devices Keats borrowed from *The Faerie Queene*. There are numerous instances of Spenserian diction, as in the archaic construction "back returneth" (1 12) and the placement of adjectives both before and after a single noun—"aged man and poor" (1 21)—that suggest Keats draws from Spenser more heavily than many critics acknowledge. Several words—"fray," "affray," "espial," "covert," and "beadsman," and many others—have no precedent in the language other than in Spenser, and most of these derive from *The Faerie Queene* (Read 8-30). Certain other elements of Spenser's language and style are also at work in Keats's poem, and a brief examination of Spenser's methods in *The Faerie Queene* will serve to illuminate a few subtleties in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

Consider first Spenser's reliance on proper names to convey allegorical meaning. In the Introduction to the Annotated English Poet Series edition of *The Faerie Queene* (1977), editor A. C. Hamilton remarks that

> Etymology is one major poetic device by which S[penser] forces a word to express its true meanings. . . . Playing wittily on the complex etymology of names obsessed S[penser] so entirely that, ideally, if one fully understood the poem's names, one would fully understand its allegory (15).

In the case of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, unravelling the
allusions and connotations that adhere to the names may not produce a complete understanding of Keats's allegory, but the etymologies are much more important than modern criticism acknowledges. The etymologies of the *dramatis personae* in *The Eve of St. Agnes* will be discussed fully below.

Another device characteristic of Spenser's allegorical poetry, Hamilton notes, is wordplay (15). An outstanding example of Spenserian-style punning in *The Eve of St. Agnes* is the play on the word "beldame," used in reference to the old crone Angela (l. 90), and the term "belle dame" that occurs in the title of the "ancient ditty" Porphyro sings to the sleeping Madeline to whom it refers by inference (l. 292). In a similar vein, Keats uses the close placement of repeated terms to add meaning to words or expressions; thus, Angela is ironically connected to the "good angels" who are deceiving Madeline (ll. 125, 142) when Porphyro calls the old woman "Good Angela" (l. 150) a few lines later.

In the GK version of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Spenser's technique of describing a character before introducing the figure by name (Hamilton 41n) is also adopted by Keats. Madeline is introduced simply as "one Lady" in stanza 5; stanzas 6 and 7 concern the legend of St. Agnes; and finally, in the first line of stanza 8 Keats names his heroine. This passage also contains another example of repetition of significantly related terms—stanza 7
concludes with the word "Magdalen" and is closely followed by the derivative "Madeline" in the next line.

Critics err when they underestimate the importance of these Spenserian elements in The Eve of St. Agnes. The numerous Spenserian borrowings circumstantially support the claim for an allegorical interpretation of the poem; it is thus possible that Keats adopts Spenser's symbolic mode as well as the tone, setting, diction, literary devices, and stanzaic form that the earlier poet had used in The Faerie Queene. In Keats's poem, however, these techniques are used not only for the lushness and sensuality that made Spenser so much admired by Hazlitt and other nineteenth-century critics (Fletcher 313-14), but for ironic purposes as well. The amorality of The Eve of St. Agnes is a sharp contrast to Spenser's Christian epic. And it is Keats himself who invites the comparison, thereby heightening the irony of his irreverent treatment of Spenser's moral, religious themes. This thematic contrast will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

Keats's appreciation for allegory as a powerful poetic mode is everywhere evident in the letters and in his poetry. Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion, though fragments, are nevertheless ambitious allegories, and the earlier, less successful Endymion is usually treated by critics as an allegory for the development of the poet's mind in the manner of Shelley's Alastor (Stillinger Poems 431). In the
letters, Keats clearly states his penchant for the allegorical mode:

... they are very shallow people who take every thing literal[]. A Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory—and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life—a life like the scriptures, figurative—which such people can no more make out than they can the hebrew Bible. Lord Byron cuts a figure—but he is not figurative—Shakspeare [sic] led a life of Allegory; his works are the comments on it.

.. (Letters 2: 67)

This reference to Shakespeare as an allegorist is particularly germane to my claim for an allegorical reading of The Eve of St. Agnes, since a few months after the poem's completion, Keats wrote that he considered its dramatic elements and its "colouring" to be the chief excellences of the poem, ones which he hoped to repeat as he moved toward his ultimate ambition—to write drama (Allott "'Isabella,' 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' and 'Lamia'" 42). For Keats, then, drama and allegory are inextricably linked; and since the poet himself considered The Eve of St. Agnes to be a dramatic poem, it follows that it also contains allegorical elements. These elements are, I think, crucial to the exegesis of the poem; and while the critics of the "ironic" school have rightly insisted on the presence of irony in The Eve of St. Agnes, they have excluded a major avenue of interpretation by also insisting that the poem is anti-romantic and non-allegorical.

I want to emphasize here that Keats is not satirizing either allegory as a poetic mode or romance as a poetic
form; his concern is with the themes that earlier poets conveyed by means of these conventions. Keats was perfectly capable of maintaining respect for a poet's skill to the degree of overtly imitating a given style while entertaining deep reservations regarding the validity of the ideas contained in the poetry he most admired. *Hyperion* is an example of this facility; Keats consciously imitates Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but his version of "the fall," even in its fragmentary form, is distinctly unbiblical. Its theme is closer to that of Wordsworth's poetry, and Keats himself explains why in the now famous letter of 3 May 1818 to J. H. Reynolds wherein he compares those two poets:

[Wordworth] is a Genius and superior [to] us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries, and shed a light in them--Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton--though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of Mind--From the Paradise Lost and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves to say, his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years, In his time englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition--and Men had got hold of certain points and resting places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much <oppressed> by the Mass of Europe not to be thought ethereal and authentically divine--who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in Comus, just at the time of the dismissal of Cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces? who would not rest satisfied with his hints at good and evil in the Paradise Lost, when just free from the inquisition and burning [sic] in Smithfield? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining Dogmas and superstitions, then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning--from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the
sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings—He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done—Yet Milton as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth—What is then to be inferr'd? O many things—It proves there is really a grand march of intellect—, It proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion . . . (Letters 1: 281-82).

M. H. Abrams finds in these passages the poet's perception of his own place in history in relation to those of his predecessors:

Keats was much less directly and persistently Biblical than any of his great fellow-poets; but he had studied carefully Wordsworth's Prospectus as well as his poems, and with his usual acumen, he recognized that Wordsworth had set himself to go beyond Milton's enterprise by humanizing Milton's "hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost" and by freeing them from Milton's "remaining Dogmas and superstitions." Keats envisaged his own destiny as a poet to be the exacting one of going beyond Milton, and Wordsworth as well, in order to develop "a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity" (Letters 1: 278-9, 282; 2: 103). (Abrams 33)

I suggest that Keats considered Spenser no less an intellectual prisoner of his time in history than was Milton, and that The Eve of St. Agnes represents the Romantic poet's mastery of a traditional mode for the purpose of dramatizing the introduction of a new system of salvation made possible by mankind's intellectual progress and necessitated by a disintegrating Christian cosmology.

This theme of transition from one system to another is a revolutionary one of which theRomantics were particularly fond. In "The Survival of Eros in Poetry," Northrop Frye writes that in every culture a mythology arises designed to
"illuminate and rationalize the structure of authority, both spiritual and temporal, within its society" (15). In the "culture of Western Europe from the beginning of the Christian era to the present day," the source of this mythology has been the Bible, and the authority it justifies is essentially ecclesiastical, since the cosmology upon which cultural institutions are erected derives from that mythology (15-16). In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, however, the Christian cosmology was beginning to collapse under the pressure of Newtonian physics, political revolution, and the advent of the Industrial Revolution; as Frye explains, "the cosmos of authority could not outlive the authority that supported it" (25). The Romantic poets, seeing themselves as heralds and prophets of the new age, recognized the decline of the traditional authority and began to develop a new cosmos which focused not on the heavens as the locus of the godhead, but on nature, the "natura naturans" (25).

Keats's interest in the demise of the old structure is evident in his poem "Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition." Written in December of 1816 in a sonnet competition with Leigh Hunt (Poems 426), whose anti-Christian sentiments were notorious, the sonnet is an early (if vitriolic) statement of the young poet's vision of the death of Christianity and the coming of a new religion:

The church bells toll a melancholy round,
Calling the people to some other prayers,
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
More heark'ning to the sermon's horrid sound.
Surely the mind of man is closely bound
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
And converse high of those with glory crown'd.
Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;
That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
Into oblivion;--that fresh flowers will grow,
And many glories of immortal stamp. (Poems 53-54)

This sonnet remained unpublished during Keats's lifetime,
though others written in similar "sonnet races" with Hunt
and/or Shelley were published (Poems 426-27). Considering
the blasphemous nature of the poem, it is not surprising
that the young poet would circulate it only among his
trusted friends. It stands, however, as a testament to the
poet's rejection of conventional Christian doctrine and as a
demonstration of Keats's belief that he and his
contemporaries were living in an age that would produce a
replacement for the "outburnt lamp" that held culture in its
"black spell" (Ryan 96-97). Keats would later moderate his
cavalier attitude toward Christianity under the influence of
Benjamin Bailey, his friend who was a student of theology at
Magdalen College, Oxford when Keats lived with him briefly
in 1817 (Ryan 118; Bate 215). From the letters, however, it
is evident that Keats continued throughout his life to
consider Christianity--indeed, any systematized religion--to
be a "pious fraud" (Letters 2: 80). On 14 February 1819 he
writes to the George Keatses:

I begin to hate Parsons ... The notions of Society
will not permit a Parson to give way to his temper in any shape—so he festers in himself—his features get a peculiar diabolical self sufficient iron stupid expression—He is continually acting—His mind is against every Man and every Mans mind is against him—He is an Hippocrite to the Believer and a Coward to the unbeliever—He must be either a Knave or an Ideot—And there is no Man so much to be pitied as an ideot parson—The soldier who is cheated into an esprit du corps—by a red coat, a Band and Colours for the purpose of nothing—is not half so pitiable as the Parson who is led by the nose by the Bench of Bishops—and is smothered in absurdities—a poor necessary subaltern of the Church . . . (Letters 2: 63)

And a month later he writes in the same long journal letter quoted above that

The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven—What a little circumscribe[d] straightened notion! (Letters 2: 101)

Keats's anti-Christian sentiments merit attention in my argument for two reasons. First, they illuminate the irony in The Eve of St. Agnes and offer support for my exegesis; and secondly, his religious bias is further evidence that his concerns were those of the other second generation Romantics, and that neither the poet nor his poetry should be severed from mainstream Romantic thought. Abrams disparages such "modern" readings of Romantic poetry and specifically addresses the myopia that dismisses the pervasive religious content:

For the fact is that many of the most distinctive and recurrent elements in both the thought and literature of the [Romantic] age had their origin in theological concepts, images, and plot patterns . . . . The phenomenon is conspicuous, and has not escaped the attention of critics and historians. If we nonetheless remain unaware of the full extent to which
characteristic concepts and patterns of Romantic philosophy and literature are a displaced and reconstituted theology, or else a secularized form of devotional experience, that is because we still live in what is essentially, although in derivative rather than direct manifestations, a Biblical culture, and readily mistake our hereditary ways of organizing experience for the conditions of reality and the universal forms of thought. (65-66)

The almost "perverse evasion" (Gibson 39) of the religious significance of The Eve of St. Agnes is due, I think, to this widespread critical assumption about Romantic poets in general that Abrams remarks, as well as to the opinions of critics that Keats's poetry reflects attitudes that belong more properly to later nineteenth-century movements--realism, aestheticism--than to his own time.14 And though Keats gives less attention to religious matters in his work than did Shelley or Hunt, his letters demonstrate that he shared the scepticism that was characteristic of other major poets of his day (Clubbe 146).

In summary, then, I take issue with those scholars who would separate Keats from his contemporaries and The Eve of St. Agnes from the major poetry of Keats's annus mirabilis. Far from being a mere "drapery" or a "respite" from the larger works, The Eve of St. Agnes is a serious poem suffused with anti-Christian sentiment carried ironically on the vehicle of Spenserian-like allegory. The impious nature of the poem is consonant both with Keats's own views as expressed in his letters and poetry, and with the attitudes of other poets with whom he associated and whose poetry he
studied. And his choice of allegory as the symbolic mode reflects his reading of major English allegorists whose method he absorbed and adopted to suit his own purpose, just as he had done in his larger poem Hyperion. Further, the allegorical mode permitted Keats to veil the irreverence of The Eve of St. Agnes in a cloak of romance so dazzling that it has continued to distract even sceptical moderns from its more esoteric themes. It is to these veiled themes that the balance of this thesis is devoted.
CHAPTER III

ETYMOLOGICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Complex allegories such as those of Spenser, Milton, and Dante, all of whom Keats had read closely, communicate by means of allusions to myths, legends, folklore, and sacred writings of which the reader must have knowledge in order to understand the subtleties of character and action in the fictions. The first step toward interpreting the allegory in The Eve of St. Agnes, then, is to discover the several allusions in the poem and to search out their referents. As an avid reader of literature and mythography, Keats commanded a wide knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology (Zwerdling 455) and was as familiar with the Bible as most educated Englishmen of his time (Jeffrey 69); these sources he "freely minglest" in his poetry and letters (Bush 108; Jeffrey 67). Douglas Bush remarks in Mythology and the Romantic Tradition that "Keats's taste in the matter of allusions is generally that of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans from whom he drew so much of his mythology . . . [his] treatment of myth is more like Spenser's than Shelley's" (108, 120). Characteristically, The Eve of St. Agnes is informed by material drawn from a variety of sources, some of which can be demonstrated with a fair
amount of certainty, and others which can only be supposed. The precise source for Keats's knowledge of the historical St. Agnes and the legend that derived from her story is unknown; Keats mentions in a letter to Bailey that the poem is "on a popular superstition" (Letters 2: 139), and Woodhouse in a cryptic note on one of the manuscripts claims that the subject was suggested by Mrs. Isabella Jones (Stillinger Poems 454). John Brand's Observations on Popular Antiquities (revised in 1813 by Henry Ellis) is a possibility, though Ellis's version of the Agnes story omits several details--the nuns weaving wool, for example--that Keats included in his poem. According to Brand, the feast of St. Agnes, celebrated on January 21, honors the Roman virgin and martyr, who suffered in the tenth persecution under the Emperor Dioclesian, A.D. 306. She was condemned to be debauched in the public stews before her execution, but her virginity was miraculously preserved by lightning and thunder from Heaven. About eight days after her execution, her parents going to lament and pray at her tomb, they saw a vision of angels, among whom was their daughter, and a lamb standing by her as white as snow, on which account it is that in every graphic representation of her, there is a lamb pictured by her side. (Ellis 1: 32; qtd. in Stillinger Poems 453)

Katharine Garvin has proposed Butler's Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and other Principal Saints (1756) as the source "most readily accessible to Keats" (359). Butler's version has it that Agnes was only thirteen years of age at the time of her glorious death. Her riches and beauty excited the young noblemen of the first families in Rome to vie with each other in their addresses who should gain her in marriage. Agnes answered them all that she had
consecrated her virginity to a heavenly spouse, who could not be beheld by mortal eyes . . . [and that] she could have no other spouse than Jesus Christ. (qtd. in Garvin 359-360)

The legend of St. Agnes's Eve that Keats incorporates into his poem is recounted in an undated chapbook entitled Mother Bunch's Closet Newly Broke Open:

On that day let no man salute thee; and at night before thou goest to bed, thou must be sure to put on the best shift thou hast, and when thou liest down, lay thy right hand under thy head, and say these words, now the god of Love send me my desires; then go to sleep as soon as possible, and you shall be sure to dream of him who will be your husband, and see him stand before you, and you may take notice of him and his complexion, and if he offers to salute thee, do not deny him, but shew him as much favour as thou canst. (qtd. in Ridley 109)

The fast and injunctions against speech follow a few pages later (110).

As so often happens when religious myths are reconstituted into folklore, the legend of St. Agnes's Eve is a secular, even profane descendent of the original pious story of the virgin saint. The superstitious maiden who would divine her future husband must dress herself as she might for her bridal bed; her prayer must be offered to the "god of Love"; she asks not merely for sight of her bridegroom, but for her "desires"; and she is admonished not to deny him when he appears and "salutes" her (judging from the wording in the chapbook it takes little imagination to envision the kind of "salute" the young lady could expect). The superstition promises to deliver a sort of premarital preview of the wedding night as an encouragement and comfort
to the chaste young woman who must suppress her sexuality until she is properly wed. In an amusingly charming paradox, the celibate St. Agnes becomes the patroness of love-starved young virgins (Baker 50).

In *The Eve of St. Agnes* Keats capitalizes on this paradox to inform the complex character of Madeline. On the one hand, Madeline is St. Agnes; she appears to Porphyro "like a saint" and "a splendid angel, newly drest,/Save wings, for heaven" (ll 222-24). As she kneels in prayer asking for "heaven's grace and boon" (l 219), she is described by the narrator as "so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint" (l 225). Her purity, however, is contradicted by her connection through her name to another saint—Mary Magdalen.

Critics have taken relatively little notice of the characters' names, and this is, I think, a serious oversight. Keats is sensitive to names, and in his letters he occasionally comments on them. In March 1818 he remarks to Bailey that the women of Devonshire "are so passable, and have such English names, such as Ophelia, Cordelia" (*Letters* 1: 242); a few days later he asks another friend, Reynolds, to "Write to me and tell me you are well or thereabouts, or by the holy Beaucoeur,—which I suppose is the virgin Mary, or the repented Magdalen, (beautiful name, that Magdalen) Ill take to my Wings . . ." (*Letters* 1: 246). In yet another letter written less than two weeks
after *The Eve of St. Agnes*, he tells the George Keatses that "I shall send you the Pot of Basil, St. Agnes eve, and if I should have finished it a little thing call'd the 'eve of St. Mark' you see what fine mother Radcliff names I have--it is not my fault--I did not search for them" (*Letters* 2: 62). The names and charactonyms in *The Eve of St. Agnes* are not merely good "Mother Radcliffe" gothicisms, however; they are carefully selected in accordance with their respective importance to the action of the poem and their etymologies.

"Madeline" is the anglicized form of *Magdalen* (Withycombe 94), and alludes to the Biblical personage Mary Magdalen. A Magdalen is a euphemism for both a penitent woman and a "fallen" woman, an object of pity and charity; thus, Madeline's "transgression" is prefigured and emphasized in her name. In the *GK* version of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats makes more explicit the connection between Madeline and the Magdalen by placing the first mention of the heroine's name after the (subsequently omitted) stanza that explains that virgins who carry out the St. Agnes ritual will experience bliss with their lovers "then to wake again/Warm in the virgin morn, no weeping Magdalen."

Clearly the poet intended the allusion to the Christian symbol of fallenness and penitence. And this allusion taken together with those to St. Agnes and the pristine descriptions of Madeline provided by the narrator suggest an ambivalence in the heroine's nature that will be dramatized
in the action as the narrative progresses.

This ambivalence is not a flaw, but a deliberate manipulation by Keats of the allegorical technique. Ambivalence, ambiguity, even contradiction are typical of allegory, for one of the mode's chief characteristics is the dramatization of a conflict of "rival authorities" --political, religious, or conceptual--that are personified into "daemonic" agents that resemble human personalities (Fletcher 22, 26-27). In the case of Madeline, the rival authorities are traditional Christian morality (represented positively by her connection to St. Agnes and negatively by her association with the penitent Mary Magdalen) and nature (represented by the multiple references to Madeline's sublimated sexual desire--her quick breathing, her anticipation of "bliss" and "delight"--and her association with the fallen Magdalen). ¹⁸ Fletcher describes such characters as "daemonic" because they are, in the Greek sense of the word, divided characters, both human and godlike who are frequently endowed with superhuman powers while at the same time subject to the mortal conditions of humanity (43, 47, 52; Spence 153).

Charles I. Patterson in The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats cites several sources from Keats's own library from which the poet could have read about daemons, or genii (18); two of these books are of particular interest--William Godwin's The Pantheon; or Ancient History of the Gods of
Greece and Rome (1814) and Spence's Polymetis (1747).

Godwin describes daemons as follows:

But the most frequent use of the word Genius in the ancient mythology, is in a sense somewhat similar to that of Guardian Angel in Christian writers: to every man were appointed at the hour of his birth two supernatural attendants, a good and an evil genius, or, according to the Greek word Daemon: these two spirits perpetually contended with each other for the chief possession of the man to whom they were addicted: the Good Genius was incessantly urging him forward to virtue, glory and prosperity, smoothing the obstacles which occurred, and keeping up his courage: while the evil Genius as constantly supplied him with treacherous suggestions, and eagerly pushed him on to vice, infamy and ruin . . . .

In a similar passage, Spence explains that genii are born with and die with their charges (he gives each person only one genius) and then adds this rationalization:

They seem to be nothing else but the particular bent and temper of each person, made into a deity: and as every body's own temper is in a great measure the cause of his happiness, or misery . . . A man's turn and temper is the chief cause and former of his good or bad fortune, said the antients; and therefore this genius may be said to preside over every man's life. (153-54)

It is easy to understand, in view of these descriptions, why daemons, daemon-like characters, and "faery" settings are the natural vehicles for allegory--particularly for romantic allegory (Frye Anatomy 33-34). Through daemonic agents the poet can infuse his characters with all the complexities of the human psyche. He can elaborate on the mystical relationships between man and god, body and soul, evil and good while simultaneously maintaining his aesthetic distance and providing a comforting buffer between his characters and his readers.
And he can universalize his themes by placing his heroes and heroines in the magical never-never land of "faery" or Camelot or the circles of Hell where his allegory is not bound by the particulars of time and space (Fletcher 68-69; Hamilton 6-8). Allegory operates in mental space, and cannot, therefore, be completely understood in terms of its mimetic qualities; for though its surface structure images the "real world," its deepest levels are understood only by the imagination that perceives abstractions. Coleridge writes that

We may then safely define allegorical writing as the employment of one set of agents and images with actions and accompaniments correspondent, so as to convey, while in disguise, either moral qualities or conceptions of the mind that are not in themselves objects of the senses, or other images, agents, actions, fortunes, and circumstances so that the difference is everywhere presented to the eye or imagination, while the likeness is suggested to the mind; and this connectedly, so that the parts combine to form a consistent whole. (Miscellaneous Criticism 30; qtd. in Fletcher 19)

I think that while composing The Eve of St. Agnes, Keats was fully conscious of the rhetorical forces at work in the allegory he was creating.

Figuratively speaking, then, Madeline embodies both the Ideal and the Real Feminine. On the one hand, she resembles Dante's Beatrice—chaste, angelic, heavenly, at once worshipful and the object of worship. Having rebuffed the "amourous Cavaliers" who approached her on tiptoe at the ball, she has preferred the spiritual lover that God will provide, not because of "high disdain," but in order to
retain her virginity. Madeline, like St. Agnes, outwardly represents the divine, non-carnal love—agape—that Burton in the third section of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* so unsuccessfully "endeavors to divide" from physical love. Yet beneath this facade runs a current of sensuality. While Madeline is described as a rose (1 243), a symbol of "the Virgin's charity" (Gibson 44), she pants when she enters her bedroom, and her heart pounds in anticipation of the "delight" she believes she is about to enjoy. Madeline's sensuality is further indicated by repeated references to her heart, Keats's oft-used symbol of humanness and physical love. In a superb simile, Keats compares her to a "tongueless Nightingale" that dies because it cannot sing; I take this image to be a poetic description of sexual repression, or as Burton would have it, religious melancholy resulting from overzealous celibacy (Burton 734-35). In Madeline's inner struggle, piety, or the ideal love of God has the upper hand (temporarily), and human passion is subsumed, though not quenched, by divine love.

In Madeline's character Keats has concentrated the conflict central to the poem as a whole. It is the same conflict between "damnation and impassioned clay" that he sees as the theme of *King Lear*, the conflict that he recognizes in Burton's descriptions of the objects of love. The rival authorities in *The Eve of St. Agnes* are Christianity and what Ryan terms Keats's "natural religion"
(23), each of which engenders a different kind of love in its devotees. The apex of Christian love is agape that flows from God through man and thence to his fellow man (Frye "The Survival of Eros in Poetry" 17). But in natural religion, such ideal, supernatural love is a chimera and is replaced by eros, with sexual love its manifestation.

Gerald Enscoe writes that

Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats describe the universe in human rather than superhuman terms: their values are centered in man. The divine is worthy of worship only in so far as it reflects, realistically and accurately, that which is in man. The deity is no abstract, absolute, and arbitrary figure, imposing his decrees upon humanity, decrees that contradict the basic nature of man. The gods have become internalized; they reside in the human psyche, and their external manifestations are but reflections of what is internal. . . . [In] Keats we have the most profound awareness of the difficulties that lie in the way of a reconciliation [of the ideal and the divine]. In the early poems, . . . Keats shared Shelley's belief that dedication to the senses was the way to salvation. Actually he takes this idea a step further. Whereas Shelley sees sensual love as the basis for approaching the ideal, Keats, especially in Endymion and The Eve of St. Agnes, deifies the sensual, replacing the old gods with the triumphant forces of Eros. (165, 168-69)

The various contrasts in The Eve of St. Agnes mirror and reinforce this fundamental dichotomy; and dramatic tension arises as much from the reader's sense that a confrontation is inevitable as it does from the surface complications built into the plot.

The insinuation of eros into a fundamentally Christian context is, of course, not a Romantic invention. Frye sees the ascendency of agape as

. . . a very considerable divergence from the tradition
of Classical literature, starting with Plato and continuing through Virgil and Ovid, which assigns a powerful impetus in human life to Eros, the energy of a love rooted in the sexual instinct, which can be a destructive passion or an ennobling power. It is profoundly significant for the central question in literary criticism of the social function of the arts, that poets from the medieval period on simply inserted Eros into their cosmos, as something the religious and philosophical authorities had left out, and ought not to have left out. . . . [In the] familiar story of courtly love in medieval poetry . . . poets worked out an elaborate correspondence between sexual love and Christian agape. (17-18)

Margaret Rudd also has remarked the prevalence of this essential duality in medieval poetry:

The twelfth century, with its flowering of poets who were also troubadours of the courts of love, is a particularly interesting time, for it was also an age of great mystics. We see the problem at its most intense and most simple at this time: the concrete, not the theoretical, conflict of eros and agape. (204)

Keats has resurrected and directly addressed this conflict; for whatever other rivalry the poem may suggest—the imagination versus experience, the real versus the ideal, romance versus realism—at its core The Eve of St. Agnes pits human love against divine love and weighs the relative worth of each. This rivalry is figured in the person of Madeline and in the person of Porphyro as individuals as well as in their relationship.

Every critic who tackles The Eve of St. Agnes must explain Porphyro's motives for plotting and executing the deflowering of a pious virgin engaged in a religious ritual because his actions are so blatantly immoral in the Christian context that Keats has so deliberately and
obviously constructed. The key to Porphyro's purpose lies in his name which has to my knowledge been only minimally researched by commentators. Two suggestions for the source of Porphyro's name have been offered by critics, though curiously, few scholars even mention the odd inclusion of a distinctly Greek name in a Gothic narrative. Porphyrius (Porphyry), the disciple of Plotinus, is one candidate (Aske 197), and Keats undoubtedly read this description of him in Lempriere's *Bibliotheca Classica*, a book which he owned and which he is said to have virtually memorized (Hewlett 30):

> Porphyrius, a Platonic philosopher of Tyre, born A.D. 233... His most celebrated work, which is now lost, was against the religion of Christ, and in this theological contest he appeared so formidable, that most of the fathers of the church have been employed on confuting his arguments, and developing the falsehood of his assertions. He has been universally called the greatest enemy which the Christian religion had... (Lempriere, under "Porphyrius")

Immediately above this entry, appears a similar name, that of Porphyrion, whom Lempriere says was "one of the giants who made war against Jupiter. He was so formidable, that Jupiter, to conquer him, inspired him with love for Juno."

Although Porphyry is not mentioned by Keats in the letters or in verse, Porphyrion is mentioned in the great catalog of the fallen Titans and giants in Book II of *Hyperion*. In *Hyperion* Porphyrion is among those giants who were "the brawniest in assault" (1 21) and who are being punished by the Olympians. In lines 23-28, Keats depicts
them as

Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, crampt and screw'd;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse. (Poems 257)

This description of the giants, defiant even in defeat, whose hearts are their dominant, vital features is echoed in several passages relating to Porphyro in The Eve of St. Agnes. Porphyro is introduced as a young man "with heart on fire/For Madeline" (ll 75-76). In the following stanza the danger Porphyro faces is described as "a hundred swords/[that] Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel" (ll 83-84). As the hero conceives the "strategem" that will release Madeline from her "enchantments cold," his heart also figures prominently in the description when "Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,/Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart/Made purple riot" (ll 136-138).

Finally, when Porphyro asks for Madeline's hand, he pictures himself as her "vassal blest/Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed" (ll 335-336). These multiple references to Porphyro's heart are consonant with Keats's depiction of Porphyrion and the other brawny giants of Hyperion; but he may have had in mind another aspect of the giants' natures, one which I think bears significantly on Porphyro's character and motives in The Eve of St. Agnes.

Keats owned a book by Joseph Spence entitled Polymetis
(1747), most of which describes various representations of mythical figures in ancient art. In a discussion of Virgil's account of the tortured inhabitants of Tartarus, Spence explains that

... Virgil seems to have distinguished them into two general classes: the first, of such as have been ungrateful or impious toward the gods ... The most impious of the former class of criminals, were the rebel giants. The poets frequently speak of their attempt to scale heaven, and of their battle with the great Celestial Deities ... [who] cast the rebels down to Tartarus: where they were to receive the full punishment of their enormous crime. The poets, in speaking of these monsters, say that they had snakes instead of legs. (277-278)

And in a footnote to this passage, Spence adds that "These strange monsters in the antient mythology, seem to have been pretty exact emblems of the disbelievers so much in fashion in our times" (note 278). Porphyro's actions in The Eve of St. Agnes certainly are "impious"--Angela, shocked by his strategem, accuses him of cruelty and impiety (1140). The wording of Angela's accusation supports the case for a giant's being the namesake of Keats's hero. But one other fact concerning the myth of Porphyrion clarifies the importance of Keats's allusion to that specific figure.

In a mythography entitled The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients, Explained from History (translated into English in 1739), the French author Abbé Banier gives the following account of Porphyrion's role in the gigantomachia:

... Porphyrion attack'd both Hercules and Juno at once, when in order to conquer him with more ease, Jupiter used a Strategem, which few Husbands would have thought of. He inspired him with Love to the Goddess,
of whom he quickly became so desperately enamoured that he was going to offer Violence to her, when Hercules with Showers of Darts, and Jupiter with his Thunder put him to Death. (2: 168)

Several pages later, having discounted the physical probability of the existence of a race of giants, Banier explains the "historical" source and meaning of the myth:

. . . in Scripture the Word Nephilim, which is translated Giants, signifies People abandoned to all kinds of Irregularities, Robbers and Ruffians. . . . The Adventure of Porphyrion, who offers Violence to Juno in Presence of Jupiter himself, no Doubt teaches us that the Captain of the Rebels really carried off that Princess, of whom he was enamoured, and that Jupiter and Hercules pursued and put him to Death. Nothing was more common in those Times than Rapes, when they could not otherwise obtain the Object beloved. (2: 205-206)

Banier's description and interpretation of the Porphyrion myth is interesting for several reasons. There is a close parallel between the story of Porphyrion's love for and capture of Juno and the plot of The Eve of St. Agnes. Similarly, the "impious," lusty nature of Porphyro and the pure, angelic character of Madeline compare favorably with the central figures of the myth. The myth further seems to inform Keats's poem in that Porphyro must steal into "Paradise" in order to obtain Madeline whose relatives are at war with his house and land. The giants' propensity for thievery may also account for Porphyro's puzzling comment in lines 340 and 341 where he claims "Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest/Saving of thy sweet self."

Whether or not Keats was aware of Banier's mythography,
the descriptions of Porphyrius and Porphyron in Lemprière and Spence are sufficient to support strong and significant parallels between Keats's character and the historical and literary figures. Porphyro's impiety together with his red-blooded humanness (his "heart") are his chief characteristics and appropriate to his role in the St. Agnes myth. Just as Madeline in one sense is St. Agnes, so Porphyro is a young pagan ravisher with no regard for the religious taboo he is breaking. In short, Porphyro represents eros, the pagan life force seemingly bent on deflowering its ethereal counterpart. Thus *The Eve of St. Agnes* can be seen as the *gigantomachia* of Hesiod in vignette, or a miniature of Milton's war between the faithful and rebel angels in *Paradise Lost*.

The etymology of Porphyro's name reveals a characteristic of the hero that is little noticed by critics of the poem. It is a commonplace in criticism of *The Eve of St. Agnes* to comment on Porphyro's eroticism, deviousness, and empathy; these qualities are evident in the action of the poem. But only in his name are the clues to Porphyro's motivation to be found. Without understanding that Keats's hero is a rebel, consciously irreverent and defiant of the moral code which he violates, critics are severely handicapped when they try to explain the purpose of Porphyro's conquest. Most writers are forced to decide between two equally unsatisfactory possibilities—either
Porphyro is a pure sensualist (as is Keats, by extension) or he is villainous, even Satanic (in which case the focus of the poem must be on Madeline rather than on Porphyro). I suggest that Keats, like Spenser before him, has endowed his protagonist with a name that reveals the most significant quality in the hero's nature. Thus, Porphyro's primary motive is flagrant disobedience of the moral code that separates him from his beloved just as surely as does his lineage.

Porphyro's character is more complex than that of a mere lusty lover on the prowl for sensual gratification. For beneath the seemingly Satanic nature of Porphyro lies a subliminal desire for purity, a longing for the "peerless bride," the Ideal Feminine. This quest is apparent in Porphyro's prayer to "All saints" to grant him "sight" of Madeline so "That he might gaze and worship" her (11 78, 80). And in his vows to her after their tryst, Porphyro calls Madeline a "silver shrine" where he can rest "After so many hours of toil and quest,/A famish'd pilgrim" (11 337-39). This is not mere "hyperbolic love language" as Stillinger claims (Hoodwinking 73); the fact that Porphyro's intentions to "worship" Madeline are revealed as his own inner thoughts (11 78-80) argues against that theory. Rather, Keats is revealing a facet of Porphyro's character in these two passages that confutes the suspicion in the reader's mind that the hero has malicious intent toward the
daughter of an enemy's house. Porphyro is a pilgrim on a dangerous quest, not a rapacious thief, and the peregrination motif both justifies his surreptitious entry into the enemy stronghold and sanctifies his motives. By making Madeline the goal of a holy quest rather than the unsuspecting prey of a concupiscent ambush, Keats reveals Porphyro to be as pious as his beloved. The knight's impiety is thoroughly relative to the Christian moral structure of the poem. And by earning the reader's sympathy for the lovers, Keats challenges that moral structure that would condemn their lovemaking.

Porphyro's values derive from another authority, the authority of pre-Christian literature that venerates eros. His religion is rooted in nature, in life. The fact that his quest is for the ideal is consistent with the Greek tradition that held the deity Eros to be a daemonic one, an intermediate spirit whose function was to "span the chasm" that divides gods and men (Fletcher 43n). The apparent contradiction in Porphyro's erotic pursuit of the divine Madeline is consonant with this Greek concept. Rudd explains that "Eros is not only divided off from agape, but is also ambiguous in itself. It is a name that covers both erotic love, and the unfulfilled yearning for a lover who is out of reach" (206).

Porphyro's purpose in The Eve of St. Agnes is to reach the lover for whom he yearns because without one another,
each is sterile, impotent, and unfulfilled. Where medieval romance so often leaves its questors pining after the unattainable mistress, Keats's knight will win his "peerless bride"; Porphyro's sacred mission is to defy the medieval, Christian sexual taboo and incarnate agape in an apocalyptic union that incorporates the human elements of paganism with the spiritual aspects of Christianity. Through this union the conflict between agape and eros is resolved and a new religion born, one that "does not affront our reason and humanity."
CHAPTER IV

THE OUTBURNT LAMP

In *Natural Supernaturalism* M. H. Abrams defines "apocalypse" as "a vision in which the old world is replaced by a new and better world" (41). For the second generation Romantics who were sceptics, if not atheists (Clubbe 146), the "old world" is the essentially Christian one of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, whose poetry reflects the dominant "concern" of their respective centuries--salvation through adherence to Christian doctrine. The "new and better world" is that created by the new generation of poets who, unhampered by the "dogmas" and "pious frauds" that governed their predecessors, have established themselves and their art as the authorities of their own age (Frye *Survival* 23-25); through poetry the Romantics work out their own salvations.

The new constructs raised by the Romantics do not entirely dispense with Christian principles; rather, the poets sought to save what was best (as they saw it) from Christianity while restructuring or redefining those precepts that were objectionable. Abrams explains that

[The Romantic writers] undertook to save the overview of human history and destiny, the experiential paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage, by reconstituting them in a way that would
make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent, for the time being. (66)

And while Shelley and Wordsworth turn to Plato for guidance and poetic primal matter, Keats in his long poems turns to Greek mythology:

John Keats, whose philosophical stance was that of humanistic naturalism, undertook to project his own 'system of Salvation' in the form of the modified classical myths of *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. (67)

Similarly, in *The Eve of St. Agnes* Keats suggests an original system of salvation. But in this poem, the focus is on the overthrow of the old order—hence the necessity for religious language and explicitly Christian allusions. Through careful manipulation of a traditional medieval quest motif, Keats dramatizes the inefficacy of the "outburnt lamp" of the Church.

*The Eve of St. Agnes* opens with what is essentially a description of the old order which is in part symbolized by the aged Beadsman. Beadsmen, priests, monks, or palmers are traditional figures in the gothic romances and ballads that were enjoying a popular resurgence in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. As such, he represents a standard of passive, solitary religious devotion with which to compare and contrast that of the dynamic young lovers. As a static character the Beadsman is important for what he represents rather than for himself as a man. For this reason he is signified by his profession rather than by a personalizing, individualizing name.
In Keats's poem, the Beadsman is not only the obligatory resident clergyman, but a "type" of an ascetic Christian devotee, one who strongly resembles the aged Hermit "Contemplation" in Book I, Canto x of *The Faerie Queene*: indeed, the Beadsman is referred to in a cancelled line of the original manuscript as an "eremite" (Beyer 149). Like Spenser's Hermit, Keats's Beadsman is an ascetic; he is "meagre, barefoot, wan" (1 12), a self-denying penitent whose special function is to keep "awake for sinners' sake to grieve" (1 27). This service he performs "for his Soul's reprieve" (1 26); in other words, for the Beadsman, salvation will be the reward for his life of poverty, celibacy, and prayers of atonement. And just as Spenser's holy man resists the distracting company of other human beings (*FQ* 1.10.49), the Beadsman turns "another way" (1 25) when the music of the revellers bursts in on his pious thoughts. He turns away from the gala in the mansion, but only after Keats hints at the monk's awareness of the life he has sacrificed in the name of religion: the Beadsman is "flatter'd to tears" (1 21) at the sound of music which is a "prelude soft" (1 28) to the sensual gathering of the celebrants.

But here the comparison with Spenser's holy man ends. And whether or not Keats intended to allude to *The Faerie Queene* in this opening scene, the contrast between Spenser's hermit and Keats's Beadsman is tempting, for it demonstrates
the negativism in Keats's treatment of this representative of Christian asceticism. In Book I, "The House of Holiness" of Spenser's epic, the hermit "Contemplation" appears. It is this holy man who will reveal to the Red Crosse Knight his true identity and who will show him the glory of heaven that awaits him if he carries out his holy duty. The following passage describes the knight's ascent to the chapel, led by the aged crone "Mercie," where he will meet with Contemplation to receive his vision and instruction:

Thence forward by that painful way they pass
Forth to an hill that was both steep and high,
On top whereof a sacred chapel was
And eke a little hermitage thereby,
Wherein an aged holy man did lie
That day and night said his devotion,
Ne other worldly business did apply.
His name was Heavenly Contemplation;
Of God and goodness was his meditation.

Great grace that old man to him given had;
For God he often saw from heaven's height,
All were his earthly eyne both blunt and bad
And through great age had lost their kindly sight,
Yet wondrous quick and persant was his sprite,
As eagle's eye that can behold the sun.

There they do find that godly aged sire,
With snowy locks adown his shoulders shed,
As hoary frost with spangles doth attire
The mossy branches of an oak half dead.
Each bone might through his body well be read
And every sinew seen, through his long fast;
For nought he cared his carcass long unfed;
His mind was full of spiritual repast,
And pined his flesh to keep his body low and chaste.

Who when these two approaching he espied,
At their first presence grew aggrieved sore,
That forced him lay his heavenly thoughts aside.
And had he not that dame respected more,
Whom highly he did reverence and adore,
He would not once have moved for the knight.

(FQ 1.10.46-49)
Spenser describes the hermit with reverence, endowing him with a "wondrous quick and persant" spirit which solitary, ascetic existence has nurtured. The holy man's self-denial is extreme, yet his mind is "full of spiritual repast." Keats's Beadsman, on the other hand, has a "weak spirit" (117); and his mind is full of thoughts of death and regret at leaving behind this life. The Beadsman has not achieved Spenser's ideal of contemptus mundi despite his asceticism and his patience. Keats's portrait is flat and ironic, lacking the reverence, awe, and didacticism that characterizes Spenser's similar scene. It is a masterstroke of subtlety in which the details that Keats omits from the description contribute as much to the irony as do the inclusion of the Beadsman's troubled thoughts and divided loyalties.

In his piety and penitence, the Beadsman embodies two tenets of Christianity which Keats found particularly "disdainful" (Goldberg 97-98), and at one time the author apparently considered a more open ridicule of the Beadsman's asceticism--in a cancelled line the narrator of the poem dismisses the monk with the sarcastic comment "give him a tear" (Ridley 114). As we have it, however, the portrait is nearly objective. If authorial prompting is evident at all, it is mildly sympathetic, as Keats permits the Beadsman a fleeting moment of self-pity for the "joys of all his life" that were never enacted but merely "said and sung," and
which can never be recaptured because "already had his death bell rung" (ll 22-23). The feeble old priest is too weak to warrant ridicule; instead Keats portrays him as a pathetic "ideot parson" passing his last few hours of life in prayer.

The decline of the old order is also figured in the death imagery that permeates these opening stanzas. The chapel itself is a tomb--dark, silent, cold--replete with funerary statues of knights and ladies at prayer (family crypts?). The single sympathetic image--the "sweet Virgin's picture" (ll 9)--is nevertheless inanimate. There is a notable absence of any pleasurable sensation; many references to the senses are purely negative. The Beadsman's fingers are numb; the sculptured worshippers are dumb; there is not even the odor of incense that in earlier days had enlivened the nave. The only sound (an implied one at that) is the muttering of the Beadsman while he tells his rosary. Except for the bitter cold, there is no feeling whatsoever in the chapel, and even the coldness is tied to death when the Beadsman's "weak spirit fails/To think how they [the sculptured dead] may ache in icy hoods and mails" (ll 17-18).

With this dreary, gothic portrait of the Beadsman, Keats deftly accomplishes several important tasks. First, the poet establishes the moral context of the poem which, like that of The Faerie Queene is mythical, deliberately obscure; the presence of plumed knights and the
architectural detail together with the presence of a Beadsman who worships the Virgin establish that the action takes place in the Middle Ages. The moral authority is thus distinctly Christian and Catholic (Garvin 364). Secondly, the religious associations in the reader's mind are set in motion immediately by Keats's opening the poem with a scene of worship. The asceticism, isolation, and penitence of the Beadsman are presented with a certain pathos that elicits sympathy while at the same time emphasizes the Beadsman's (and by extension the Church's) weakness. Finally, the scene sets up one side of the intrinsic contrast that will become fully apparent only when Porphyro reaches Madeline's bedchamber where the lovers will engage in a form of "worship" that is passionate and alive.

The death imagery that pervades the "Beadsman scene" is important not only as a means for contrasting the stagnation of the old order with the vitality of the new, but because in The Eve of St. Agnes death is consistently treated as a transitional state rather than as a terminal one. In his discussion of statuary images, Sperry remarks that Keats uses the frozen figures of the knights and ladies in the second stanza in the same way he will use the kneeling Porphyro later in the poem--as a means of dramatizing "repression" that is quickly followed by "gratification" (206-07). Sperry is accurate in noting the constant shifts of states of being in the poem; however, I think these
shifts arise not solely from Keats's grasp of the complexity of human psychology (205), but from the poet's theory of the progress of human history as well. Keats's idea that new systems rise Phoenix-like from old ones is prominent one in the poems of late 1818 and early 1819. It is particularly evident in the "King Lear" sonnet and in Hyperion. In lines 7 to 14 of the sonnet, Keats longs for a "new romance," but it is one that is built upon the old:

Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,  
Begetters of our deep eternal theme!  
When through the old oak forest I am gone,  
Let me not wander in a barren dream:  
But, when I am consumed in the fire,  
Give me new phoenix wings to fly at my desire.  
(Poems 166)

And in Book III of Hyperion, the process of Apollo's deification involves the god's absorption of all human knowledge from Mnemosyne followed by deathlike convulsions:

'Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,  
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,  
Creations and destroyings, all at once  
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,  
And deify me, as if some blithe wine  
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,  
And so become immortal.' . . .

Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush  
All the immortal fairness of his limbs;  
Most like the struggle at the gate of death;  
Or liker still to one who should take leave  
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang  
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse  
Die into life:  
(11 113-20; 124-30)

The Beadsman's passing bell signals at once the demise of institutionalized Christianity and the birth of a new system, one that incorporates the best of the old order and corrects its errors. In The Eve of St. Agnes, the
prediction that the "black spell" of the Church is on the wane is fulfilled, and from its ruins arises a more humanitarian, individualistic religion made possible only by the retirement of the former order. In one sense, then, the old authority "dies into life"; Porphyro and Madeline will usher in a new era that is not only necessitated, but facilitated by the order which it replaces. The interdependence of the elements in this destruction/creation cycle contributes to the ambivalence in *The Eve of St. Agnes* that has been variously interpreted as Keats's fascination with the "dilemma" of reconciling the "beauty of romance" with the "harsh truths of reality" (Kern 172) and his mysticism (Wasserman 15). I think, however, it results from his humanism and his concept of the "balance of good and evil" in the world.

Keats rejects those tenets of Christianity that punish or repress man's "natural self," yet he retains the altruism and empathy that he so admired in the de-mythologized history of Christ and Socrates. And his central characters, Madeline and Porphyro, will each reflect a balance of foolishness and wisdom, deception and ingenuousness, selfishness and altruism. It is the moment of perfect balance of these various elements that is celebrated in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, while the extremes on either side are treated with irony. Thus the Beadsman's self-pitying tears serve as a subtly ironic criticism of
his ascetic practices that have produced not spiritual fulfillment, but regret for the pleasures of this life that he has rejected. And the priest's foreboding at the thought of what it feels like to be dead taken together with his implied wish to pass on to the other world "without a death" further disparages the success of his extremist self-denial.

This same irony appears in the superstitious ritual of St. Agnes's Eve that promises sensual fulfillment as a reward for abstinence (Baker 50). Baker has noticed the careful distinction Keats makes in the poem between superstition and true religion, claiming that this contrast forms a central theme in the narrative (49). I think, however, that Keats emphasizes the paradoxical St. Agnes myth for the purpose of equating it with the similarly paradoxical religious practices. The only difference between the religion and the superstition is that the religion promises spiritual fulfillment as a reward for asceticism, while the superstition offers a quasi-sensual experience if the participant renounces the pull of the flesh. The impossibility of Madeline's desires being fulfilled by any means other than the ones which Porphyro presents echoes the equally chimerical desire of the Beadsman to be taken up "without a death." It is not only Madeline, but the Beadsman who is "hoodwinked" (Stillinger 84).

By equating Christianity with superstition, Keats
delivers a powerful criticism of the "old order." In The Anatomy of Melancholy which Keats was reading at the time he composed The Eve of St. Agnes (Gittings 140-41), Burton rages against religious practices (primarily "papist" ones) that are the product of superstition:

... And all the world knowes Religion is twofold, True or False: False is that vaine superstition of Idolaters, such as were of old, Greeks, Romans, present Mahometans ... When false Gods, or that God is falsely worshipped ... They that are suspitious [sic], are still fearing, suspecting, vexing themselves with auguries, prodigies, false tales, dreams, idle, vaine works unprofitable labours, as Boterus observes, ... Enemies to god & to themselves: in a word as Seneca concludes ... superstition destroyes, but true religion honors. But being so misled all their lives in superstition, & carried Hood-winked like so many hawks, how can they [the body of "believers"] prove otherwise then blind Idiots, and superstitious Asses: what shall we expect else at their hands. (715-16;731)

Just as Burton sympathizes with the ignorant believers in superstition, so Keats withholds ridicule of the Beadsman and Madeline; instead, he presents the celibate monk and the young virgin as deluded victims of a system that encourages repression of the flesh. Keats's criticism, then, falls on the ideology itself, and not on the misled believers.

The connection between superstition and religion is most clearly revealed in the character of Angela who indiscriminately mixes references to both practices as she speaks to Porphyro. Stanza 15 of the GK version will serve as an example of Keats's subtle technique:

'St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve--
Yet Men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's seive,
And be liege lord of all the Elves and Pays,
To venture so about these thorny ways
A tempting Be'lzebub:--St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my Lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good Angels her deceive,
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

Angela begins by implying a religious taboo that condemns murder, particularly on sacred occasions. She then suggests that Porphyro possesses some sort of magic against personal danger—but the danger is equated with the Devil, Be'lzebub. When she refers to Madeline as a "conjuror," Angela makes no distinction between the power of magic and the power of prayer. She also says that good angels are capable of deception. Finally, when the irony of coincidence dawns on Angela, she bursts into laughter.

Angela's laughter indicates that the old woman takes neither religion nor superstition seriously. Had she believed that Porphyro's appearance was the result of divine intervention, she might have shown some type of reverence or awe as the witness to a miracle. Had she believed that Madeline actually conjured Porphyro, her expected reaction would be one of fear or amazement. But Angela laughs, and the entire episode takes on a comic tone as "Porphyro upon her face doth look,/ Like puzzled Urchin on an aged Crone,/ Who keepeth clos'd a wondrous riddle book . . . ." (ll 128-130).

This brief scene functions dramatically as a touch of comic relief in an otherwise tense, dangerous situation. Angela's earthy, unexpected laughter also makes more
plausible her eventual compliance with Porphyro's irreverent strategem; clearly she is on the side of the young lovers, and her sympathy with them draws the reader in as well. On a more subtle level, however, Angela's character contributes thematically to the overall irreverence of the poem. By closely weaving religious and superstitious terminology in Angela's speech, Keats effectively blurs the distinction between them, implicitly suggesting that the two systems of belief are interchangeable. Angela's laughter and her supporting role in the deception of Madeline further undermine the authority of the moral code for which she is the single spokesperson in the poem. Her feeble admonishments on behalf of Christian morality and Madeline's honor are deftly brushed aside by Porphyro who wheedles the old woman with words "So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,/That Angela gives promise she will do/Whatever he shall wish . . ." (11.160-162). Angela's easy yielding to Porphyro's desires emphasizes the weakness of the old order; and her description--"A poor, weak, palsy-stricken,, churchyard thing,/Whose passing bell may ere the midnight toll" (11.155-156)--recalls the Beadsman who is also aged, weak, and dying like the faith to which he clings.

Old Angela is stronger than a "stock" character, but is not a main character in The Eve of St. Agnes. Thus, she merits a name, but the name is a charactonym, derived from her function as an angel. Here "angel" is used in its
classical sense, meaning a messenger, a mediator between heaven and earth. Like the Beadsman, she represents the old order, but it is the order corrupted by superstition. Angela's faith lies midway between the sacred and the profane. Her dramatic function—to enable the union of Porphyro and Madeline—is thus reflected thematically. She is in every way an intermediary figure. And she, too, can be contrasted ironically with the ancient guide "Mercie" in _The Faerie Queene_, for she leads Porphyro to his sacred destination which is, in Keats's treatment, Madeline's bedchamber that is itself pictured as a chapel, replete with a magnificent stained glass window. The allusion is implied by the frequency of the word "mercy" as it appears in connection with Angela. Hers is the single "breast" that offers Porphyro "mercy" in the "mansion foul" (11 88-89); and she exclaims "Mercy, Porphyro" (1 98) when she first meets the young knight in the hallway. Furthermore, just as Mercie instructs Redcrosse in the duties of "charitee" incumbent on a young knight, so Angela instructs Porphyro to pray and to marry honorably the innocent Madeline.

The appellation may also allude to Angela's relationship to Porphyro who calls her at various times "Gossip" (1 105) and "Goody" (GK), both of which titles are appropriate to one's _godmother_ (OED 1: 1176; 1179). Angela is figuratively Porphyro's "godmother" as further indicated by her remark that her prayers for him "each morn and
evening, / Were never miss'd." (ll 157-58). Angela will demonstrate her attentiveness to her godmotherly duties when, later in the poem, she rebukes Porphyro, then reminds him of his moral responsibility to marry Madeline once he has been with her in the privacy of her bedroom. Keats is apparently unconcerned with answering the question as to why Porphyro's godmotherly friend is a servant in the house of his enemies where she has access to the private chambers and stores of its members. The necessity of a sympathetic agent who enables the union of Madeline and Porphyro overrides the need to explain in full the history of the enmity of their families and how Angela came to be in the "mansion foul," details which are, like many others in the poem, missing yet unmissed.22

Because they represent the old order, the "outburnt lamp," both Angela and the Beadsman will die. Like the St. Agnes moon that gradually wanes and abruptly sets at the moment of the lovers' union, the two old people pass away on the night of the birth of the new order. In the GK version, the deaths of Angela and the Beadsman are treated with an almost bitter irony, and this revision has caused much consternation among critics. Woodhouse, too, complained of the tone Keats used in the revised manuscript (see above), and the ad hoc censors decided on the milder original passage as the one most suitable for print. It is significant, I think, that Keats argued for his more ironic,
negative revision. The poet, according to Woodhouse, intended the ending to be unsettling, though if he told Woodhouse why, the latter thought better of explaining Keats's reasoning to the conservative Taylor.

The objection to the GK ending concerns the Beadsman's death more than Angela's, for in both the published and revised versions, Angela dies of palsy. The Beadsman stiffens and dies between sighs and laughter. Critics are puzzled by what the sighs and laughter represent, and most reject this ending as a bitter sarcasm on Keats's part and a flaw in the poem (Bate 443n; Baker 53). But I see no reason to excuse or explain away the tenor of the revised ending. Keats has already shown the Beadsman to be fearful, doubting, and remorseful. The monk's tears at the sound of music set the stage for what is probably ironic laughter. Furthermore, the Beadsman's laughter is paralleled by that of Angela; and in a poem where every element is contrasted with its opposite, the laughter offsets the Beadsman's own sighs and tears. Critics also seem to overlook the fact that the ending Taylor finally chose is hardly more sympathetic to the Beadsman. In the published version, the Beadsman dies alone and "For aye unsought for" (1 378). "Aye" in this sentence means "ever"; thus the Beadsman remains isolated and ineffective in death, even as he was in life (Goldberg 97). Both endings emphasize the impotency of the Beadsman and his "trade."
I find the GK ending more consonant with the negativism that opens the poem and that characterizes Keats's treatment of Angela's character. Neither the Beadsman, who represents the contemptus mundi tenets of Christianity, nor Angela, who symbolizes superstitious belief, merit sympathy from the reader. The solitary, ineffective Beadsman, full of fear and doubts, dies a death that reflects the life he has lived. And Angela, having outlived her usefulness to both Madeline and Porphyro, is no longer necessary. Both of these old people have contributed to the "hoodwinking" of Madeline; they are deluded by the pious frauds of Christianity, and are responsible for deluding others. Their deaths are mandated by the terms of the destruction/creation cycle that directs the action in the poem, and are inevitable. Death is a transition in The Eve of St. Agnes, and the passing of the old order is merely the climax in the apocalyptic transfer of authority.
CHAPTER V

THE APOCALYPTIC MARRIAGE

The Eve of St. Agnes is a poem of process and of progress. The progress is that of the individual (and by extension, of all mankind) toward a new, humanistic religion that incorporates the sensual as well as the spiritual. The process described in the poem is that of individual salvation that is brought about through the union of agape and eros. In The Eve of St. Agnes these two systems dovetail and culminate figuratively in the apocalyptic marriage of Madeline and Porphyro. In Keats's letters, however, the two concepts are treated separately and explicitly; two passages are particularly germane to this discussion--one from a letter of May 1818 and the other from the long journal epistle of April 1819.

In the first letter, Keats sets out for his correspondent John Reynolds an extended "simile of human life" that describes the "advance of intellect" that he sees reflected in the poetry of Wordsworth:

I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me--The first we step into we call the infant or thought-less Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think--We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a
bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle—within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression—whereby This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages—We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist—We are now in that state—We feel the "burden of the Mystery," To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote "Tintern Abbey" and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. (Letters 1:280-82)

The progress that Keats describes here—the intellectual progress of both the individual and of collective mankind—is dramatized in The Eve of St. Agnes (Weiner 128). It appears as Porphyro penetrates the mansion through dark passages and arrives at the moonlit "Maiden-Chamber" where Madeline lies. It is figured in Madeline's ascent from the deathlike trance that is nearly "impossible to melt" (1 283) to the vibrant reality of flesh-and-blood lovemaking. The dark and frightening passages that lead out of the chamber are the labyrinthine hallways in the mansion that conceal "sleeping dragons" (1 353) and "hyena foemen" (1 86) or that dead-end in a tomblike chapel or chimney nook.

The ability to distinguish between the real and the ideal that results from the seeker's gradual awakening to the paradox of human existence is paralleled in the
transformation that both Madeline and Porphyro undergo in the "Maiden-Chamber." Madeline, waking from her trance, sees that the Porphyro who kneels at her bedside is "pallid, chill and drear" (1311) compared to her idealized conception of him. Only after Madeline has passed from this stage of intellectual development into the next by the means of a sexual rite de passage will she be able to accept the conditions of real, human love (Weiner 126). Porphyro, too, will modify his idealized conception of his lover who, transformed in his eyes by the play of moonlight and stained-glass, at first appears angelic, divine. The spell is broken when at length Madeline awakens and speaks "voluptuous" words to him, moving the transfixed lover to express his love in real, human terms (Gradman 73).

The intellectual progress that Keats describes in his letter and dramatizes in The Eve of St. Agnes has theological implications as well. Abrams sees the "advance of intellect" in the May 1818 letter as "the movement from Christian supernaturalism to agnostic humanism. For Milton's 'hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost' were grounded still on the 'remaining Dogmas and superstitions' which survived the Protestant Reformation; thus 'he did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done'" (124). Keats's theology, on the other hand, is grounded in the human heart and in the human mind. It is the progress of the collective intellect that makes possible
this humanized religion that offers salvation through the
symbiotic relationship of the heart and the mind.

Keats's system of salvation is detailed in the April
1819 journal epistle to his brother and sister-in-law in the
famous "vale of soul-making" passage, part of which I have
already quoted above, but repeat here to preserve the
context of Keats's comments:

The common cognomen of this world among the misguided
and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we
are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition
of God and taken to Heaven--what a little
circumscribe[d] straightened notion! Call the world if
you Please 'The vale of Soul-making' Then you will
find out the use of the world (I am speaking now in the
highest terms for human nature admitting it to be
immortal which I will here take for granted for the
purpose o showing a thought which has struck me
concerning it) I say 'Soul making' Soul as
distinguished from an Intelligence--There may be
intelligences or sparks of the divinity in
millions--but they are not Souls <the> till each one is
personally itself. I[n]telligences are atoms of
perception--they know and they see and they are pure,
in short they are God--how then are Souls to be made?
How then are these sparks which are God to have
identity given them--so as ever to possess a bliss
peculiar to each ones individual existence? How, but
by the medium of a world like this? This point I
sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander
system of salvation than the chryst<e>ain [sic]
religion--or rather it is a system of
Spirit-creation--This is effected by three grand
materials acting the one upon the other for a series of
years--These three Materials are the Intelligence--the
human heart (as distinguished from intelligence or
Mind) and the World or Elemental space suited for the
proper action of Mind and Heart on each other for the
purpose of forming the Soul or Intelligence destined to
possess the sense of Identity. . . I will call the
world a School instituted for the purpose of teaching
little children to read--I will call the human heart
the horn Book used in that School--and I will call the
Child able to read, the Soul made from that school and
its hornbook. Do you not see how necessary a World of
Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and
make it a soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, It is the Minds Bible, it is the Minds experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity—As various as the Lives of Man are—so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence—This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity. (Letters 2: 101-102)

In this letter Keats records specifically his objections to Christianity. It is "narrow" because it denigrates the "world"—the natural, mutable world. It is "arbitrary" because man has no control over his own salvation—he is dependent on the "intervention of God."

Keats resists the concept of a doctrine that offers no justification for human suffering and death. The poet sees in Christianity's "circumscribed" notions a complete renunciation of life as nothing more than a "vale of tears" through which we pass and in which we suffer needlessly.

In The Eve of St. Agnes, the Beadsman and Madeline, both hoodwinked by Christian doctrine, dramatize this rejection of life. But while the Beadsman's commitment to the doctrine is complete and extreme, Madeline's allegiance to Christian piety is compromised by her sensuality which, though sublimated, is nevertheless vital. In an ironic reversal of the conventional tale of the fallen Magdalen, it is Madeline's sensuality that enables her redemption; her "fall" is a fortunate one (Weiner 126; O'Connor 24).

The significance of Madeline's dual nature becomes more
apparent by comparing her to Spenser's true and false Unas. In Book I, Canto i of *The Faerie Queene*, the Red Crosse Knight, on a quest for his redemption, becomes the champion of Una, symbol of purity. He is bound to her by courtly fealty, but his relationship to her is idealized. In order to interfere with the knight's quest, Archimago sends to him a lying dream in which the false Una appears and tries to seduce Red Crosse. He is so repulsed by her erotic gestures, that when he awakens, he flees, leaving the real Una without explanation. In *The Eve of St. Agnes* Keats endows Madeline with a delicate blend of chastity and sensuality. The impulse that drives her to perform the ritual that will deliver her lover in a dream to her bed is eros. Yet even this innocent and permissible superstitious rite would be unthinkable for Spenser's Una. Keats's Madeline conforms more closely to the false Una in Red Crosse's dream with her voluptuousness, her panting anticipation and pounding heart, and her nudity that so arouses the worshipful Porphyro.

But Keats saves his heroine from concupiscence by placing her in a trance during which her soul "fatigues away" and in which she symbolically returns to a state of innocence "as if a rose could shut and be a bud again" (1.2.43). Madeline is responsible for "conjuring" the union, but she is innocent of carnality because she is ignorant of the nature of the union itself. In this way Keats is able
to show that Madeline's erotic impulses do not compromise
her innocence. Had Madeline been fully aware of what she
was doing when she invited Porphyro to her bed, she would
have lost her status as an ideal. She must be the passive
recipient of knowledge, the quiescent soul that awaits the
Bridegroom over whose actions she has no control.

In contrast to Madeline's passivity is Porphyro's
vitality. The knight is characterized by symbols of
flesh-and-blood manhood--his fiery heart, changeable
complexion, rash temper. Like Red Crosse, Porphyro is on a
quest--he is a "pilgrim" and Madeline's "eremite." He
shares Red Crosse's rashness, devotion to his Lady, and
courage. But unlike his Spenserian counterpart, Porphyro is
thoroughly of this world. His virtue lies in his allegiance
to this life, whereas the Red Crosse Knight will achieve his
redemption by renouncing the world. Porphyro's quest for
identity will end when he takes Madeline for his Bride. But
Red Crosse never achieves union with the spiritual in this
life. The active principle of the Red Crosse knight is
symbolized by the emblem he bears on his shield--the cross.
But Keats's hero's potency derives from another source--his
heart, the "hornbook" that guides him through this life and
which plays an important role in helping him to achieve
integration. He is Madeline's "shield, heart shaped and
vermeil dyed" (1 336). He is the Red Heart knight of the
Romantic poet's new system of salvation, the protector of
Madeline's beauty, her savior by virtue of his power to "redeem [her]/ From such a stedfast spell" (ll 286-287) that estranges them.

Throughout The Eve of St. Agnes, the heart is a pervasive symbol--the word appears eight times in the poem. It is mentioned in connection with both Porphyro and Madeline, while Angela and the Beadsman are referred to as "weak spirits." To Keats the heart symbolizes not only passion but that ineffable faculty of man that is the essence of humanness itself. In the "vale of soulmaking" letter, Keats appends his explanation of his system of salvation with this digression on the heart:

I began by seeing how man was formed by circumstances--and what are circumstances?--but touchstones of his heart?--and what are touchstones?--but proovings of his heart? and what are proovings of his heart but fortifiers or alterers of his nature? and what is his altered nature but his soul?--and what was his soul before it came into the world and had these proovings and alterations and perfectionings?--An intelligence--without Identity--and how is this Identity to be made? Through the medium of the Heart. And how is the heart to become this Medium but in a world of Circumstances? (Letters 2: 103-104)

In Keats's secularized, humanized religion, the heart is the means of salvation. Redemption does not depend on the "arbitrary intervention" of God, or the sacrifice and intervention of Christ. Man is responsible for his own salvation, and it is in this world that the soul will mature to its perfection. Porphyro's allegiance to his heart is a religious one; Keats's knight is as pious in the context of The Eve of St. Agnes as is Red Crosse in the Spenserian
allegory. Love is Porphyro's religion; and his purpose, like that of Red Crosse, is to champion his faith and thereby achieve his own salvation, his own identity. And since Porphyro's religion requires the expression of human love, the Romantic knight must have a human object of devotion. Thus Madeline serves both as the means of Porphyro's redemption and the agent of her own salvation.

The trope Keats chooses to express this allegory of the process of salvation made possible by the progress of mankind's intellect is the Biblical apocalyptic marriage of Christ, the Bridegroom, to the Church, His Bride. The analog is a fertile one and well-suited to Keats's purpose. And in choosing the apocalyptic marriage as the vehicle for his theodicy, Keats fully exploits a rich literary tradition.

In his sub-chapter on "The Apocalyptic Marriage" in Natural Supernaturalism, Abrams remarks that both Spenser and Milton drew heavily on the Book of Revelations for imagery and themes of the Apocalypse, and "the preoccupation with Apocalypse in these two poets had important consequences for their Romantic successors in the prophetic tradition" (38). A central trope in Revelations is that of the sacred or apocalyptic marriage, symbolizing the reclamation by Christ of the body of believers, his Church. In the Middle Ages, Biblical commentators "transferred the locus of the marriage of the Lamb from the apocalyptic conclusion of history to the individual soul, which they
held to be capable of achieving, even in this fallen life, the acme of experience, the mystic union with Christ the Bridegroom" (46). Thus, certain Christian mystics wrote of each man's individual spiritual journey, the goal of which "is the death and renovation of the old self by means of a 'spiritual marriage' of the soul . . . to Christ as Bridegroom, in a \textit{unio passionalis} which sometimes is set forth in metaphors of physical lovemaking, or even of violent sexual assault, that disconcert a modern reader by their candor and detail" (50).

In Keats's allegory for the spiritual marriage, the Bridegroom, or active agent, is Porphyro. The Romantic redeemer is erotic, rather than spiritual. It is the flesh that must approach the spirit in the poem; thus Keats reverses the roles of the traditional trope--spirit, or \textit{agape} in \textit{The Eve of St. Agnes} is passive until it is acted upon by eros. But erotic activity, without the spark of divinity and purity that characterize \textit{agape}, is mere carnality. In Keats's system, salvation depends on the reconciliation of the two forces that in the Christian construct had been mutually exclusive. In \textit{The Eve of St. Agnes}, the action moves inexorably towards a rejection of the old extremism and a rapprochement of the opposing forces. Enscoe identifies this conflict of opposites as central to Romantic thought:

The key idea in the Romantic concept of the struggle between the warring elements in man's nature is one of
reconciliation rather than opposition. Instead of opposing "sense" to "spirit," or "body" to "soul," the Romantics seem to be trying to heal the tortured human psyche. They are not even Manicheans finding meaning in the perpetual conflict between equally powerful forces, although their attempts to redefine the elements in the cosmic struggle may resemble the Manichean idea at times. They no longer define spirituality as good, sensuality as bad or less good; and, like the Manicheans, they feel that spirit and sense are inextricably interwoven in man's nature. But they do not accept the necessity of eternal struggle; the Romantics are seeking the kind of integration of the psyche to which Freud and Jung will later give their names. (166)

Thus, evil in The Eve of St. Agnes is not inherent in the opposed elements, but in the condition of separation, or imbalance of agape and eros in the individual human psyche. The "mansion foul" that is the setting of The Eve of St. Agnes illustrates and symbolizes the evil of separation. The mansion is a house divided. On the one hand is the Beadsman who represents ascetic spirituality. Opposed to the holy man are the Baron and his warrior guests, the "whole bloodthirsty race" (199) of men who, warlike, drunken, and lusty, are characterized by their earthy venality. Like the Beadsman, the Baron and his entourage remain chiefly in the background of the poem. And the two opposing forces--spirituality and carnality--are estranged from each other and from the other characters in the poem: Porphyro never confronts his enemies or the Beadsman; the Beadsman turns away from all human contact; Angela shuffles back and forth between the lovers, avoiding "dim espial" by the other inhabitants of the "mansion foul"; and Madeline,
though at one point among the revellers at the ball, mentally shuts herself away from any meaningful contact with them. The Baron and the Beadsman thus function thematically and structurally as polar extremes representing human behavior that is insular and isolationist. The agape of the Beadsman is corrupted into sense-denying asceticism; and the eros of the Baron and his warriors is descended to decadent carnality.

Against this backdrop of sensual and spiritual extremes, Keats places Madeline and Porphyro, whom he endows with dualistic natures that incorporate both agape and eros. Because these characters are uncommitted to either asceticism or decadence, they occupy the middleground between the extremism of the Baron and the Beadsman. The contrasts in the poem, then, are not limited to those of spirituality and carnality; they expand to oppose conditions of the human psyche that preclude integration (the Baron and the Beadsman) against those that engender it. The complexity in the characters of the protagonists represents the reconciliation of agape and eros that exists in potentia in the individual psyche and, by extension, in the larger human context; but this reconciliation or integration will become manifest only through the union of Madeline and Porphyro. As long as the lovers remain estranged, integration is impossible.

The necessity of an "other" to the successful
comingling of agape and eros is evident in the theodicies of other major Romantic poets. William Blake constructed a new mythology through his poetry that identified the dangers inherent in Christian dualism and posited a reformed Christianity that would correct the old error of opposing body and soul. Rudd explains that in Blake's system Jerusalem who is intuitive, physical, earthy, if trying to be self-sufficient, looks for salvation in a kind of overwhelming and murky earthiness and fails. Or, like Thel, she may flee in horror from her own passionate nature and find balm in the inverted and festering passion which is Puritanism and masks as religion, what Blake means by 'pale lecherous virginity.' Albion too can be falsely self-sufficient and then his rational spectre takes over and deceives him into thinking he is being 'spiritual.' He too fails and then sometimes looks for salvation in a form of rational materialism that has nothing to do with true passion. Only when he and Jerusalem discover that the spirit in one desires and needs the bodily passion of the other, and vice versa, is there a chance of incarnation and resurrection of both spirit and the senses. In this light the senses are indeed the gateways to eternity. Mystical union is the contact of body with spirit, the knowing by the senses of that which the mind cannot contain. (190)

Similarly, in The Eve of St. Agnes neither Madeline nor Porphyro is self-sufficient—and they both realize their need for one another. Porphyro travels with firm intent to the enemy's citadel where Madeline awaits him, having "conjured" him in her dream to her side. Whereas Blake shows his protagonists themselves descending to the depths of false self-sufficiency, Keats chooses to allude to these empty choices by placing in the background of the action the spectres of the Beadsman and the Baron who represent figuratively the type of people that Madeline and Porphyro
might become if they continue to sublimate the forces within them that are seeking affirmation. Madeline, who has suppressed her sexuality, is in danger of becoming like the Beadsman if Porphyro does not find a way to release her from the "enchantments cold" with which she is deluding herself. And without Madeline's ennobling, spiritualizing love, Porphyro might become a mere sensualist, motivated only by self-gratification and lust.

In *The Eve of St. Agnes*, then, the apocalyptic marriage of Madeline and Porphyro is a mutually redemptive one. Each partner becomes a fully integrated human being—a soul with an identity—by means of a paradoxically spiritualizing worldly union. The salvation of Madeline and Porphyro depends not on the "arbitrary intervention" of a supernatural agent but on the willingness of each partner to permit the flourishing of the total psyche, despite the pain inherent in the paradox of human existence. This pain results not only from the "slings and arrows" of circumstance and indifferent fortune, but from the very nature of humanness.

This union, however, poses thorny philosophical problems. How is agape—pure, divine, spiritual—to be united with eros, its antithesis, without the annihilation of one or the other or both? It is this question with which Keats was apparently struggling when he penned his spontaneous response to Burton's sensual descriptions of the
objects of divine love. Eros and agape, if brought together, would form only a "horrid relationship"; and the "horror" would result not from the influence of the spirit on the flesh, but from the pollution of pure, spiritual love by "winnyish" erotic love. The problem is a particularly poignant one for the Romantics. Rudd, in her discussion of Christianity and Blake's poetry, writes that

The perplexity and suffering of man because of his own dual nature is the essence of romanticism, and as such, romanticism has existed always in Western civilization. Man as the intersection of two worlds suffers because he partakes of the nature of animals, and of God. He is both creature and creator. Thinking men in every age have tried to find some way out of the difficulty, almost always trying to shut off half the truth and simplify matters to an either-or. . . . All heresy is essentially the exaltation of one side of the Incarnation at the expense of the other. (203)

In the letters and major works of 1819, Keats seems to be sounding out the disparity that Rudd identifies. Whether the poems concern the relationship of the real to the ideal, or the body to the soul, or bliss to suffering, paradox becomes an important theme to Keats. The romances in particular are peopled with extremists who suffer or inflict suffering because they are unable to balance opposing elements in a world that "perplexes" bliss and pain. The despondent knight of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" suffers unreasonably over the loss of his lady; the sensuous, loving Lamia is cruelly exposed by the icy stare of Apollonius. In The Eve of St. Agnes, however, Keats finds a solution to the perpetual war of opposites by bringing them together in a
perfect balance and "marrying" them. He steps beyond the "chamber of maiden-thought" and into a dark passage where he grasps "the balance of good and evil," if only fleetingly.

In *The Finer Tone* Earl Wasserman discusses at length Keats's approach to the conflict of opposites which the critic sees most clearly figured in "Ode to a Grecian Urn." Wasserman writes that Keats considered the synthesis of opposites to be impossible; however, the human imagination can experience a "mystic interfusion of contraries . . . occasionally and momentarily" (15). Wasserman goes on to say:

Like the humanity and/or divinity of the figures, like the marriage-chastity of the urn and the virginity-ravishment of the maidens, the immortality of the urn and the temporality of the figures are delicately poised on each side of the heaven's bourne, yearning towards that area of mystic interfusion . . . The ecstasy brings together the pursuit and the music, the human and the superhuman, and, by conveying an impression of exquisite sense-spirit intensity, leads us to that fine edge between mortal and immortal where passion is so intense that it refines itself into the essence of ecstasy, which is without passion. (19: emphasis mine)

Refined passion--the "essence of ecstasy"--is Keats's solution to the "horrid relationship" of agape and eros. And this is achieved by rejecting the supremacy of eros; by poising in a delicate and transient balance eros and agape, passion is refined and spirituality incarnated in a moment of ecstasy. This moment occurs in *The Eve of St. Agnes* when Porphyro, in response to Madeline's plea (1 314) to "leave me not in this eternal woe" (her barren dream), becomes
"Beyond a mortal man impassioned far" (1 316). Madeline brings to the marriage divine, ethereal love that will refine their passion; and Porphyro provides the human, real love that will enable the incarnation.

The mystical interfusion of agape and eros is accomplished figuratively in the consummation of the two lovers. In that moment of ecstasy, the new order is brought to fruition. Once again, the sceptre of authority passes from one system to a successor, just as it had on the night that "Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt" (1 171) when magic and sorcery made way for the flowering Christianity. The old order—symbolized by the chaste St. Agnes moon, and by the old "weak spirited" man and woman—passes away. And Madeline and Porphyro achieve redemption for themselves by serving as the means for one another's salvation.

Here also is evidence of Keats's ironic technique; for after Madeline and Porphyro "die the little death," they are regenerated and awakened. Porphyro realizes that he has been "sav'd by miracle" (1 339); and Madeline, after a brief moment of bewilderment, understands that her "heart is lost in thine [Porphyro's]" (1 331). Each is transformed by the experience.

The apocalyptic marriage is an epiphany, as is the ecstasy that it figuratively represents. And though ecstasy cannot be sustained, as bliss cannot be unperplexed from
pain, it can be repeated. That potential exists as long as
the lovers, now espoused, are together. Romantic progress
and process do not halt with an apocalypse; rather, the
epiphany ushers in a new age of possibilities. For Keats,
the opportunities for bliss, or mystical experience, or
religious/erotic ecstasy are limited by the conditions of
the real world which, paradoxically, also help to create
them. The storm that arises at the moment of the
consummation and into which the lovers flee symbolizes these
conditions. When Madeline and Porphyro enter the storm,
they symbolically accept the real, mutable world and the
pain of suffering and mortality that are the terms of this
life.

The ability to accept the conditions of mortality
derives from the couple's new knowledge. The requitement of
love in this life is the theme of the poem and the
fundamental premise of Keats's system of salvation. Thus
the allegorical and literal meanings of the apocalyptic
marriage of Madeline and Porphyro dovetail at the moment of
the consummation, and a new religion is born—one that is
ininitely human, realistic, and satisfying.
APPENDIX

Following is the GK transcript of The Eve of St. Agnes as it appears in Ridley, pages 180-90. I have added a single (*) to mark single lines that contain significant deviations from the 1820 published version and a double (**) to flag the complete stanza that was eliminated by Taylor and Woodhouse. I have also numbered the stanzas for convenience when comparing the two versions. The stanza in the GK transcript that was omitted from 1820 is not numbered so that corresponding sections of the two versions can be more easily compared.

1
St. Agnes' Eve--Ah bitter chill it was!
The Owl for all his Feathers was acold;
The hare limped trembling thro' the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath
Like [pious] incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death
Past the sweet Virgin's Picture, as his prayer he saith.

2
His prayer he saith, this patient, holy Man,
Then takes his lamp and riseth from his knees
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead on each side seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black purgatorial rails.
Knights, Ladies, praying in dumb Orat'ries
He passeth by and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.
3
Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged Man and Poor:
But no--already had his death bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his Soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake for sinners' sake to grieve.

4
That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd for many a door was wide
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
High-lamped chambers, ready with their pride
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed
Star'd where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their breasts.

5
At length burst in the argent revelry,
With tiara and plume and rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairly
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn sole thoughted, to one Lady there
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old Dames full many time[s] declare.

6
They told her how upon St. Agnes' Eve
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their love receive
Upon the honied middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright:
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties lily white;
Nor look behind nor sideways, but enquire
Of heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.
'Twas said her future lord would there appear
Offering as sacrifice--all in the dream--
Delicious food even to her lips brought near:
Viands and wine and fruit and sugar'd cream,
To touch her palate with the fine extreme
Of relish: then soft music heard; and then
More pleasures followed in a dizzy stream
Palpable almost: then to wake again
Warm in the virgin morn, no weeping Magdalen.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music yearning like a god in pain
She scarcely heard; her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by--She heeded not at all--in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amourous Cavalier,
And back retired; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere:
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams the sweetest of the year.

She danc'd along with vague uneager eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short.
The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger and in sport;
Mid looks of love, defiance, hate and scorn,
Hood wink'd with faery fancy; a la mort,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So purposing each moment to retire,
She lingere'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart afire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss--
in sooth such things have been.
10
He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart love's fev'rous citadel:
For him those chambers held barbarian hordes
Hyena foemen, and hot blooded Lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old Beldame, weak in body and in Soul.

11
Ah! happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory headed wand,
To where he stood hid from the torches flame,
Behind a broad hall pillar, far beyond
The sound of Merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy Jesu! hie thee from this place;
"They are all here to-night, the whole bloodthirsty race."

12
"Get hence! Get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand:
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his grey hairs--Alas me! flit!
Flit like a Ghost away"--"Ah Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm chair sit,
And tell me how"--"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me child or else these stones will be thy bier."

13
He follow'd through a lowly arched way
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she utter'd "Wella--well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, lattice'd chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline" said he,
"O tell me Goody by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see
When they St. Agnes wool are weaving piously."
"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve--
Yet Men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so about these thorny ways
* A tempting Be'lzebub:--St. Agnes' Eve!
* God's help! my Lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good Angels her deceive,
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

Feebly she laugheth in the languid Moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled Urchin on an aged Crone,
Who keepeth clos'd a wondrous riddle book
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
Sudden his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His Lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Sighs, at the thought of those enchantments cold:
Sweet Madeline asleep in lap of Legends old.

Sudden a thought came fullblown like a rose,
Heated his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel Man and impious thou art:
Sweet Lady, let her pray and sleep and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart

From wicked Men like thee: O christ, I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

"I will not harm her; by the great St. Paul,"
Sweareth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace,
When my weak voice shall unto heaven call,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela beleive me by these tears:
Or I will, even in a Moments space,
Awake with horrid shout my foemen's ears
And beard them, though they be more fange'd than wolves and bears."

From wicked Men like thee: O christ, I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.

"I will not harm her; by the great St. Paul,"
Swear thee Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace,
When my weak voice shall unto heaven call,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela beleive me by these tears:
Or I will, even in a Moments space,
Awake with horrid shout my foemen's ears
And beard them, though they be more fange'd than wolves and bears."
"How canst thou terrify a feeble Soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd"—Thus plaining doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, if such one there be;
That he might see her beauty unespied,
Or win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legione'd fairies pac'd the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met
Since Merlin pay'd his demon all the monstrous debt.

"It shall be as thou wishest:" said the Dame:
All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feastnight: by the tambour frame,
Her own lute thou wilt see:—no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head:
Wait here my child with patience: kneel in prayer
The while: sooth thou must needs the Lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lovers endless minutes quickly passed;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her, with aged eyes agast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The Maiden's chamber silken, hush'd, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain;
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.
Her fault'ring hand upon the Ballustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed Maid,
Rose, like a spirit to her, unaware:
With silver taper['s] light, and pious care
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro; a gazing on that Bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring dove fray'd and Fled.

Out went the taper as she floated in;
Its little smoke in pallid moonshine, died:
She clos'd the door, she panted, all a kin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or woe betide:
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled in her dell.

A casement high and triple arch'd, there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device;
Innumerable of staines and splendid dyes
As are the tiger moths deep damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of Queens and Kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon:
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
Save wings, for heaven:--Porphyro grew faint:
She pray'd, too pure a thing, too free from mortal taint.
Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,  
of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;  
Unclasps her warmed jewels, one by one;  
Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees  
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:  
Half hidden, like a Mermaid in sea weed,  
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees  
In fancy fair St. Agnes in her bed,  
But dares not look behind or all the charm is fled.

Soon trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,  
Untill the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd  
Her soothed limbs and soul fatigued away:  
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow day;  
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;  
Clasp'd like a Missal, where swart Paynims pray,  
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this Paradise and so entranc'd,  
Porphyro gaz'd upon her empty dress,  
And listene'd to her breathing if it chance'd  
To wake into a slumbrous tenderness;  
Which when he heard that minute did he bless,  
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,  
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,  
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,  
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where lo!—how fast she slept.

Then by the bed side, where the faded Moon  
Made a dim silver twilight, soft he set  
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon  
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—  
O for some drowsy morphean amulet!  
The boisterous, braying, festive clarion,  
The kettle drum and far heard clarinet,  
Affray his ears though but in dying tone:—  
The Hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.
And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he brought from the cabinet a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrup[s], tinct with cinnamon:
Manna and dates, in Argosy transferr'd,
From Fez: and spiced da[i]nties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicates he heape'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes, and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.--
["And now my love my seraph fair awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine Eremite:
Open thine eyes for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sunk in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains: 'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his Lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed Phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,--
Tumultuous,--and in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty long since mute,
In provence call'd "La belle dame sans merci:"
close to her ear touching the melody;--
Wherewith disturb'e'd, she utter'e'd a soft moan:
He cease'd--she panted quick,--and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sunk pale as fair sculptur'd stone.
Her eyes were 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:
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And mourn forth witless words with many a sigh
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye(s),
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
And tun'd, devout, with every softest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How chang'd thou art! how pallid, cold and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro;
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!"

See while she speaks his arms encroaching slow
Have zon'd her, heart to heart--loud, loud the dark winds blow.

For on the midnight came a tempest fell.
More sooth for that his close rejoinder flows
Into her burning ear:--and still the spell
Unbroken guards her in serene repose.
With her wild dream he mingled as a rose
Marryeth its odour to a violet.
Still, still she dreams.--louder the frost wind blows,
Like love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window panes: St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: still pattereth the flaw blown sleet:
"This is no dream my Bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.--
Cruel what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not for my heart is lost in thine
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing:--
A Dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."
"My Madeline! Sweet dreamer! lovely Bride!
Say may I be for aye, thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield heart shaped and vermeil dyed?
Ah silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished Pilgrim,—sav'd by miracle
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou thinkst well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude Infidel."

"Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise arise! the morning is at hand:--
The bloated wassaillers will never heed:--
Let us away my love with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,--
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! Arise! my love and fearless be
For o'er the southern Moors I have a home for thee."

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears--
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
The Arras rich with horseman, hawk(e) and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging winds uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like Phantoms, into the wide Hall;
Like Phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty beaker by his side:
The wakeful Bloodhound rose, and shook his hide
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one and one the bolts full easy slide:--
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;--
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans--
And they are gone: aye ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin worm,
* Were all benightmar'd. Angela went off
* Twitch'd with the Palsy; and with face deform
* The beadsman stiffen'd, twixt a sigh and a laugh
* Ta'en sudden from his beads by one weak little cough.
NOTES

1 Angus Fletcher notes that Coleridge, insisting on a sharp distinction between symbol and allegory, claims "(allegory) cannot be other than spoken consciously;--whereas in . . . (the symbol) it is very possible that the general truth may be unconsciously in the writer's mind during the construction of the symbol" (Miscellaneous Criticism 29; qtd. in Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1964), p. 17). Throughout this paper I use the term allegory in the Coleridgean sense of conscious multiple meaning. For an extensive discussion of English and German theories of symbol and allegory, see Fletcher, pp. 1-23.

2 Hyder Rollins published the letters of Keats and his circle in three consecutive works—The Keats Circle (1948); More Letters and Poems of the Keats Circle (1955); and The Letters of John Keats (1958). I have used the latter publication for all references to the letters and shortened the title to Letters.

For all quotations from the letters I have retained Rollins' version of Keats's punctuation and spelling; where clarification seemed necessary, I have inserted [sic].

3 Typical of this type of biographical criticism is Dorothy Van Ghent's analysis of the poem in Keats: The Myth


5 Keats's original draft (minus the first page) and the two Woodhouse transcriptions are at Harvard (Stillinger Texts 28). The George Keats transcript is at the British Museum (23).

6 Gail McMurray Gibson also comments on these deletions in her article "Ave Madeline: Ironic Annunciation in Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes'," (*Keats-Shelley Journal* 26, 1977, pp. 39-50): "Keats's publishers probably censored the oaths simply because they broke the Second Commandment, but it may be wondered if they removed Christ's name from the poem partly because of an uneasy awareness that Christ's Incarnation was being parodied in Keats's narrative" (47). Her speculation is borne out by the sharpness of Taylor's comments and by the reactions of conservative reviewers of the poem, some of whom remarked the lack of moral and religious sensibility in *The Eve of St. Agnes*. These reviews are reprinted in Donald Reiman's *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers*, Part C: Shelley, Keats, and London Radical Writers, (New
York: Garland, 1972. 2 vols.). Of particular interest are
the reviews in the British Critic (September 1820)—"We
cannot approve of the morality of the principal poems in
this little collection" (Reiman 1: 225); and the Eclectic
Review (September 1820), which contains the remark that
Keats has no "regulating principle of religion" (1:339).

There is one notable and highly disputed speculation
that bears noting here. Robert Gittings in John Keats: The
Living Year 21 September 1818 to 21 September 1819,
(Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1954) presents arguments for the
strong influence of Mrs. Isabella Jones, one of Keats's
acquaintances, as the inspiration for the poem (172-74).
Aileen Ward in John Keats: The Making of a Poet, (New York:
Viking P, 1963) also emphasizes the Jones connection (245).
In an article countering Gittings' claims, Miriam Allott
discredits the connection, noting that each of the
"parallels" Gittings finds between The Eve of St. Agnes and
the scanty knowledge available about the relationship
between the poet and the lady could be identified in Keats's
earlier poems. See Allott's "'The Feast and the Lady': A
Recurrent Pattern in Keats's Poetry." Notes and Queries 199

Typical of this opinion are those offered by Ward: "It
seems likely that he [Keats] felt both The Eve of St. Agnes
and The Eve of St. Mark were distractions from the real task
of Hyperion, for he referred to each of them as 'little'
things . . ." (254). Bate, in a similar vein, writes that Keats "turned temporarily to a less ambitious poem in a different form" and that it is a "mere exercise" (452).

Bate claims that the poem "when once begun, answered temporarily so many other needs or interests, including the need, in the face of loss and difficulty, to retreat in some way to the familiar [the romance form]--to what he knew beforehand he could do without much effort . . ." (440).

This ironic school of criticism is spearheaded by Jack Stillinger in "The Hoodwinking of Madeline: Skepticism in The Eve of St. Agnes, Studies in Philology 58 (1961), pp. 533 to 555; reprinted in The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems (Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 67-93. (All future references to this essay are to the latter publication). Stillinger claims that beginning with Isabella (written in March 1818) and running through the rest of the poems of Keats's brief career is a progressive scepticism toward the truth of the visionary imagination; this scepticism becomes a "growing dissatisfaction with romance . . . [that] culminates paradoxically in a tremendous vision of anti-romantic 'truth' (Hoodwinking 31). The Eve of St. Agnes is, in Stillinger's view, an ironic romance wherein Madeline as the "hoodwink'd" dreamer must be awakened to reality. He rejects any reading of the poem as allegory (89n).

I do not intend to imply that Keats is satirizing or
mocking Spenser. Keats held an abiding admiration for his predecessor that began in his childhood when he was introduced to *The Faerie Queene* by C. Cowden Clarke (Bate 32-33) and continued through his last months when he bought a copy of *The Faerie Queene* for Fanny and glossed passages for her that he thought were of particular beauty (Read 7). His first known poem and his subsequent verses praising Spenser testify to the poet's continued admiration for his predecessor's poetic skill. This respect did not extend, however, to Spenser's themes as I will demonstrate further on.


13 For an extensive list of "certain," "probable," and "possible" borrowings from *The Faerie Queene* and other Spenserian works, see William Read's *Keats and Spenser* (Folcroft Press, 1970); reprinted from the original 1897 volume (Heidelberg: Geisendorfer). Read also provides careful consideration of Keats's possible debt to Mrs. Tighe and Dr. Beattie, both of whom were Keats's contemporaries and thought to be influences. Read notes, however, that Keats's spelling and diction conform more closely and consistently to Spenser's than to those Spenserian
imitators.

14 Typical of this view is Stillinger's claim that Keats's realistic world view makes the poet a "saner if in some ways less romantic poet than his contemporaries" and therefore "the Romantic poet most likely to survive in the modern world" (Hoodwinking 93).

15 I refer here to referents for the myths and legends only, and do not include literary sources which may have influenced aspects of plot, characterization, and imagery. Source hunting has yielded little more than an eclectic gathering of Keats's reading; with one exception, these sources do not concern my argument since they do not seem directly related to the theme of The Eve of St. Agnes. Spenser's The Faerie Queene is the exception, since I think The Eve of St. Agnes may be an intentional contrast to that work.

16 Notable exceptions to this generality include Katharine Garvin, who remarks the significance of Madeline's connection with Mary Magdalen (358) and traces the Greek origin of Porphyro's name to its ancient meaning of "fire-bearing" or "fire-bearer" and to the Latinized form meaning "purple" and its derivatives which connote "the warm red of complexion, the colour of healthy life" (362); Gail Gibson, who also cites the etymology of Madeline, noting Keats's emphasis on the name in the deleted stanza (49); and David Weiner, who sees significance in the fire imagery
connected with Porphyro and alluded to in his name (123).

17 See Garvin for another view of Mary Magdalen as "her to whom first of all Christ promised perfect union, after His resurrection" (360).

18 The Eve of St. Agnes is not the only work in the Keats canon that contains this allusion. Baker, in his explication of Hyperion, finds a parallel in Keats's description of Thea's ministrations to Saturn (Book I:106-12) with Mary Magdalen's attentions to Christ in Luke 4:37-38 (99).

19 Evert notes that the gigantomachia is also alluded to in Endymion (Book I: 11 791-92), and that in both Hyperion and the earlier poem, Keats confuses the Titans with the giants (228).


21 In The Poetics of Romanticism: Toward a Reading of John Keats, (Yellow Springs: Antioch P, 1969), Milton Goldberg argues that Keats relates the senses to social and moral ideals. He claims that "for Keats, as for Hazlitt, sensation provides the essential spark for moral and social illumination" (97).
Other such missing elements include the reason for the ball; Madeline's relationship to the Baron; the reason for the enmity between Porphyro's family and Madeline's; and how Madeline and Porphyro came to know one another.

In his article "The Secularization of the Fortunate Fall in Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes' " (Keats-Shelley Journal, 1980, pp. 120-30), David Wiener presents an argument similar to the one that follows here. The essential difference between his interpretation and mine is that Wiener sees the motif of the fortunate fall figured in Madeline's sexual initiation. My argument follows Wiener's, however, on the point that in the poem "Keats offers what he calls a grander system of salvation" (129).
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Kern, Robert. "Keats and the Problem of Romance."


