Doctoral Thesis Abstract: The diamond path: a study of individuation in the works of John Keats

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Romanticism as a particular phase in the evolution of Western consciousness is characterised by a creative reconnection to the collective unconscious as a key aspect of introverted thinking. Individuation as self-realisation involves, as does the Romantic imagination, the struggle to unify creatively through the balance and synthesis of opposites. After a brief discussion of these ideas, this thesis examines the development of Keats' poetry in terms of a basic pattern of transformation in which an initially unified state of consciousness is divided, then re-collected as a "higher" unity through a process of maturation.

Two important unifying symbols - the diamond orb in Endymion and the square edged stone at the end of The Fall of Hyperion - form the two ends of a thread of development along which Keats' poetry is self-creative through its healing of the "dis-ease" of inner division to reform the unified self. This quest for unity is examined through several paradigms of individuation, all of which are harmonious with the basic principles of Romanticism and Jungian thought. These are, in order, the Neoplatonic quest for the One as Truth and Beauty, the alchemical synthesis of opposites to form the Philosophers' Stone, the Gnostic paradox of the "fortunate fall" into self-division, and the creative tension between the unified Apollonian self and the Dionysian self-divided sufferer who is in principle synonymous with Milton's Satan. Keats accordingly inverts the significance of the Miltonic Christian Fall by ascribing a positive potential to the Dionysian transitional state of paradox. Within this perspective Keats' philosophy of "Soul-making" expresses the Gnostic striving of the divine "spark" as the latent individuality of the self to ascend through the ambivalent space of individuation to conscious realisation.

Through the progressive integration of all these principles, Keats is seen to be an intuitively Gnostic and primarily introverted thinker whose quest for redeeming self-knowledge reflects his own maxim: "That which is creative must create itself."

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