

The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream Late in 1818, while he was serving as nurse to his dying brother Tom, Keats planned to undertake an epic poem, modeled on *Paradise Lost*, that he called *Hyperion*. Greek mythology gave Keats its subject—the displacement of Saturn and his fellow Titans by a new generation of gods, Zeus and the other Olympians. But in engaging this topic Keats addressed the epic question at the center of *Paradise Lost*: how did evil come into the world and why? The Titans had been fair and benign gods, and their rule had been a golden age of happiness. Yet at the beginning of the poem all the Titans except Hyperion, god of the sun, have been dethroned; and the uncomprehending Saturn again and again raises the question of how this injustice could have come to be.

In book 3 of the original *Hyperion*, the scenes among the Titans are supplemented by the experience of the Olympian Apollo, still a youth but destined to displace Hyperion as the sun god among the heavenly powers. He lives in “aching ignorance” of the universe and its processes but thirsts for knowledge. Suddenly Apollo reads in the face of his tutor Mnemosyne—goddess of memory, who will be mother of the Muses and so of all the arts—the silent record of the defeat of the Titans and at once soars to the knowledge that he seeks. Apollo cries out:

Knowledge enormous makes a God of me,
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. . . .

This opening out of Apollo's awareness to the tragic nature of life is what the Titans lacked. As the fragment breaks off, Apollo is transfigured—not only into one who has earned the right to displace Hyperion as god of the sun, but also into the god of the highest poetry.

Keats abandoned this extraordinary fragment in April 1819. Late that summer, however, he took up the theme again, under the title *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*. This time his primary model is Dante. In Dante's *Divine Comedy* all the narrated events are represented as a vision granted to the poet. In the same way, Keats begins *The Fall of Hyperion* with a frame story whose central event is that the poet-protagonist, in a dream, falls from a paradisaal landscape into a wasteland and there earns the right to a vision. That vision reincorporates the events narrated in the first *Hyperion*: Moneta (her Latin name suggests “the Admonisher”), who stands in the same relationship to the poet as, in the earlier tale, Mnemosyne stood to Apollo, permits, or challenges, this protagonist to remember, with her, her own memories of the fall of the Titans. By devising this frame story, Keats shifted his center of poetic concern from the narration of epic action to an account of the evolving consciousness of the epic poet.

Keats abandoned this attempt at *The Fall of Hyperion* at the sixty-first line of the second canto. (A fragment was published, against his wishes, in his 1820 volume of poems.) He wrote to Reynolds on September 21, 1819:

I have given up Hyperion. . . . Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations.

In the same letter Keats mentions having composed two days earlier the ode “To Autumn.” In this, the poet had envisaged the circumstance of the cycle of life and death, and had articulated his experience in his own poetic voice.

The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream

Canto I

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
 A paradise for a sect; the savage too
 From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
 Guesses at heaven: pity these have not
 Trac'd upon vellum^o or wild Indian leaf
 The shadows of melodious utterance.
 But bare of laurel¹ they live, dream, and die;
 For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
 With the fine spell of words alone can save
 Imagination from the sable charm
 And dumb^o enchantment. Who alive can say
 "Thou art no poet; mayst not tell thy dreams"?
 Since every man whose soul is not a clod
 Hath visions, and would speak, if he had lov'd
 And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
 Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
 Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
 When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.

Methought I stood where trees of every clime,
 Palm, myrtle, oak, and sycamore, and beech,
 With plantane, and spice blossoms, made a screen;
 In neighbourhood of fountains, by the noise
 Soft showering in mine ears, and, by the touch
 Of scent, not far from roses. Turning round,
 I saw an arbour with a drooping roof
 Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
 Like floral-censers swinging light in air;
 Before its wreathed doorway, on a mound
 Of moss, was spread a feast of summer fruits,
 Which, nearer seen, seem'd refuse of a meal
 By angel tasted, or our mother Eve;²
 For empty shells were scattered on the grass,
 And grape stalks but half bare, and remnants more,
 Sweet smelling, whose pure kinds I could not know.
 Still was more plenty than the fabled horn³
 Thrice emptied could pour forth, at banqueting
 For Proserpine return'd to her own fields,⁴
 Where the white heifers low. And appetite
 More yearning than on earth I ever felt
 Growing within, I ate deliciously;
 And, after not long, thirsted, for thereby
 Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice,
 Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,

1. The laurel, associated with Apollo, is the emblem of poetic fame.

2. In *Paradise Lost* 5.321ff Eve serves the visiting angel Raphael with a meal of fruits and fruit juices.

3. The cornucopia, or horn of plenty.

4. When Proserpine each year is released by her husband, Pluto, god of the underworld, for a sojourn on Earth, it is the beginning of spring.

And, pledging all the mortals of the world,
 And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
 Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.⁵
 No Asian poppy,^o nor elixir fine
 Of the soon fading jealous caliph;⁶
 No poison gender'd in close monkish cell
 To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,⁷
 Could so have rapt unwilling life away.
 Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd,
 Upon the grass I struggled hard against
 The domineering potion; but in vain:
 The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sunk
 Like a Silenus⁸ on an antique vase.
 How long I slumber'd 'tis a chance to guess.
 When sense of life return'd, I started up
 As if with wings; but the fair trees were gone,
 The mossy mound and arbour were no more;
 I look'd around upon the carved sides
 Of an old sanctuary with roof august,
 Buildd so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
 Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of heaven;
 So old the place was, I remembered none
 The like upon the earth; what I had seen
 Of grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
 The superannuations^o of sunk realms,
 Or nature's rocks toil'd hard in waves and winds,
 Seem'd but the faulture^o of decrepit things
 To^o that eternal domed monument.
 Upon the marble at my feet there lay
 Store of strange vessels, and large draperies,
 Which needs had been of dyed asbestos wove,
 Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,⁹
 So white the linen; so, in some, distinct
 Ran imageries from a sombre loom.
 All in a mingled heap confus'd there lay
 Robes, golden tongs, censer, and chafing dish,
 Girdles, and chains, and holy jewelries.¹

Turning from these with awe, once more I rais'd
 My eyes to fathom the space every way;
 The embossed roof, the silent massy range
 Of columns north and south, ending in mist
 Of nothing, then to eastward, where black gates
 Were shut against the sunrise evermore.
 Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
 An image, huge of feature as a cloud,

5. The drink puts the poet to sleep and effects the dream within a dream that constitutes the remainder of the fragment.

6. A council of caliphs, Muslim rulers, who plot to kill each other with a poisonous drink ("elixir").

7. The College of Cardinals. This scenario of poisoning, like the preceding Orientalist reference to intrigue among the caliphs, recalls a

stock setting of the period's Gothic novels.

8. An elderly satyr, usually represented as drunk.

9. Matthew 6.20: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."

1. Offerings to the gods were spread on the floor of Greek temples.

At level of whose feet an altar slept,
 90 To be approach'd on either side by steps,
 And marble balustrade,^o and patient travail
 To count with toil the innumerable degrees. *banister*
 Towards the altar sober-pac'd I went,
 Repressing haste, as too unholy there;
 95 And, coming nearer, saw beside the shrine
 One minist'ring;² and there arose a flame.
 When in mid-May the sickening east wind
 Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
 Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
 100 And fills the air with so much pleasant health
 That even the dying man forgets his shroud;
 Even so that lofty sacrificial fire,
 Sending forth Maian³ incense, spread around
 Forgetfulness of every thing but bliss,
 105 And clouded all the altar with soft smoke,
 From whose white fragrant curtains thus I heard
 Language pronounc'd. "If thou canst not ascend
 These steps,⁴ die on that marble where thou art.
 Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
 110 Will parch for lack of nutriment—thy bones
 Will wither in few years, and vanish so
 That not the quickest eye could find a grain
 Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.
 The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
 115 And no hand in the universe can turn
 Thy hour glass, if these gummed^o leaves be burnt
 Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps."
 I heard, I look'd: two senses both at once
 So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
 120 Of that fierce threat, and the hard task proposed.
 Prodigious seem'd the toil; the leaves were yet
 Burning,—when suddenly a palsied chill
 Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
 And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
 125 Upon those streams^o that pulse beside the throat:
 I shriek'd; and the sharp anguish of my shriek
 Stung my own ears—I strove hard to escape
 The numbness; strove to gain the lowest step.
 Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace: the cold
 130 Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart;
 And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
 One minute before death, my iced foot touch'd
 The lowest stair; and as it touch'd, life seem'd
 To pour in at the toes: I mounted up,
 135 As once fair angels on a ladder flew
 From the green turf to heaven.⁵—"Holy Power,"

2. Who identifies herself in line 226 as Moneta.
 3. Maia was one of the Pleiades, a daughter of Atlas and (by Zeus) the mother of Hermes. She was the goddess of the month of May.
 4. These steps that the poet must ascend were probably suggested by the stairs going up the

steep side of the purgatorial mount in Dante's *Purgatorio*.

5. The ladder by which, in a dream, Jacob saw angels passing between heaven and Earth (Genesis 28.12 and *Paradise Lost* 3.510–15).

Cried I, approaching near the horned shrine,⁶
 "What am I that should so be sav'd from death?
 What am I that another death come not
 140 To choke my utterance sacrilegious here?"
 Then said the veiled shadow—"Thou hast felt
 What 'tis to die and live again before
 Thy fated hour. That thou hadst power to do so
 Is thy own safety; thou hast dated on
 145 Thy doom."⁷—"High Prophetess," said I, "purge off
 Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film."⁸
 "None can usurp this height," return'd that shade,
 "But those to whom the miseries of the world
 Are misery, and will not let them rest.
 150 All else who find a haven in the world,
 Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
 If by a chance into this fane^o they come,
 Rot on the pavement where thou rotted'st half."⁹—
 "Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
 155 Encourag'd by the sooth¹ voice of the shade,
 "Who love their fellows even to the death;
 Who feel the giant agony of the world;
 And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
 Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
 160 Other men here: but I am here alone."
 "They whom thou spak'st of are no vision'ries,"
 Rejoin'd that voice—"They are no dreamers weak,
 They seek no wonder but the human face;
 No music but a happy-noted voice—
 165 They come not here, they have no thought to come—
 And thou art here, for thou art less than they.
 What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe,
 To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing;
 A fever of thyself—think of the earth;
 170 What bliss even in hope is there^o for thee?
 What haven? Every creature hath its home;
 Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
 Whether his labours be sublime or low—
 The pain alone; the joy alone; distinct:
 175 Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
 Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
 Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
 Such things as thou art are admitted oft
 Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
 180 And suffer'd in^o these temples; for that cause
 Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees."
allowed to enter

6. As, e.g., in Exodus 27.2, "And thou shalt make the horns of [the altar] upon the four corners thereof." In his description of the temple and its accoutrements, Keats deliberately mingles Hebrew, Christian, and pagan elements to represent the poet's passage through the stage represented by all religions, which are "dreams" made into the creed for "a sect" (lines 1–18).

7. I.e., you have postponed the time when you

will be judged.

8. Cf. Milton's plea, following his account of his blindness, for a celestial light that might "Shine inward": "Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence / Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight" (*Paradise Lost* 3.52–54).

9. I.e., where you halfway rotted.

1. Soothing, also truth-telling.

"That I am favored for unworthiness,
 By such propitious parley medicin'd
 In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
 185 Aye, and could weep for love of such award."
 So answer'd I, continuing, "If it please,
 Majestic shadow, tell me: sure not all²
 Those melodies sung into the world's ear
 Are useless: sure a poet is a sage;
 190 A humanist, physician to all men.
 That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
 They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
 What am I then? Thou spakest of my tribe:
 What tribe?"—The tall shade veil'd in drooping white
 195 Then spake, so much more earnest, that the breath
 Mov'd the thin linen folds that drooping hung
 About a golden censer from the hand
 Pendent.—"Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
 The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
 200 Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
 The one pours out a balm upon the world,
 The other vexes it." Then shouted I
 Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen,³
 "Apollo! faded, far flown Apollo!
 205 Where is thy misty pestilence⁴ to creep
 Into the dwellings, through the door crannies,
 Of all mock lyrists, large self worshipers,
 And careless hectorers in proud bad verse.⁵
 Though I breathe death with them it will be life
 210 To see them sprawl before me into graves.⁶
 Majestic shadow, tell me where I am:
 Whose altar this; for whom this incense curls:
 What image this, whose face I cannot see,
 For the broad marble knees; and who thou art,
 215 Of accent feminine, so courteous."
 Then the tall shade in drooping linens veil'd
 Spake out, so much more earnest, that her breath
 Stirr'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping hung
 About a golden censer from her hand
 220 Pendent; and by her voice I knew she shed

2. Keats's friend Richard Woodhouse, whose manuscript copy of the poem is our principal source of the text, crossed out lines 187–210 with the marginal comment next to lines 197–99: "K. seems to have intended to erase this & the next 21 lines." Probably the basis for his opinion is the partial repetition of lines 187 and 194–98 in lines 211 and 216–20.

3. With the anger ("spleen") of the Pythia, the priestess who served at Delphi as the oracle of Apollo, the god of poetry.

4. Apollo was a sender of plagues as well as the inspirer of prophecy and poetry. He was also the god of medicine. Keats's medical studies gave him special reason to be interested in this figure and the roles he combined.

5. This has been thought to refer to Byron, or else to several contemporaries, including Shelley

and Wordsworth. But the poetic types, not individuals, are what matter to Keats's argument.

6. In lines 147–210 we find a series of progressive distinctions: (1) between humanitarians who feel for "the miseries of the world" and people who are "thoughtless" sleepers (lines 147–53); (2) within the class of humanitarians, between those who actively "benefit . . . the great world" and the poets who are "vision'ries" and "dreamers" (lines 161–69); (3) and within the class of poets, between those who are merely dreamers and those who are sages and healers (lines 187–202). As in the colloquy between Asia and Demogorgon (see Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* 2.4.1–128, pp. 835–38), the interchange here may be taken to represent, in dramatized form, a process of inner analysis and self-discovery on the part of the questing poet.

Long treasured tears. "This temple sad and lone
 Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
 Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
 Against rebellion: this old image here,
 225 Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
 Is Saturn's;⁷ I, Moneta, left supreme
 Sole priestess of his desolation."—
 I had no words to answer; for my tongue,
 Useless, could find about its roofed home
 230 No syllable of a fit majesty
 To make rejoinder to Moneta's mourn.
 There was a silence while the altar's blaze
 Was fainting for sweet food: I look'd thereon
 And on the paved floor, where nigh were pil'd
 235 Faggots of cinnamon, and many heaps
 Of other crisped spice-wood—then again
 I look'd upon the altar and its horns
 Whiten'd with ashes, and its lang'rous flame,
 And then upon the offerings again;
 240 And so by turns—till sad Moneta cried,
 "The sacrifice is done, but not the less
 Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.
 My power, which to me is still a curse,
 Shall be to thee a wonder; for the scenes
 245 Still swooning vivid through my globed brain
 With an electral changing misery
 Thou shalt with those dull mortal eyes behold,
 Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not."
 As near as an immortal's sphered words
 250 Could to a mother's soften, were these last:
 But yet I had a terror of her robes,
 And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
 Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries
 That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
 255 This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
 Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
 Not pin'd^o by human sorrows, but bright blanch'd
 By an immortal sickness which kills not;
 It works a constant change, which happy death
 260 Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
 To no death was that visage; it had pass'd
 The lily and the snow; and beyond these
 I must not think now, though I saw that face—
 But for her eyes I should have fled away.
 265 They held me back, with a benignant light,
 Soft mitigated by divinest lids
 Half closed, and visionless^o entire they seem'd
 Of all external things—they saw me not,
 But in blank splendor beam'd like the mild moon,
 270 Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
 What eyes are upward cast. As I had found

exhausted

blind

7. Cf. the "shattered visage" of the fallen statue in Shelley's "Ozymandias" (p. 790).

A grain of gold upon a mountain's side,
 And twing'd with avarice strain'd out my eyes
 To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,
 275 So at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
 I ached to see what things the hollow brain
 Behind enwombed: what high tragedy
 In the dark secret chambers of her skull
 Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
 280 To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
 Her planetary eyes; and touch her voice
 With such a sorrow. "Shade of Memory!"
 Cried I, with act adorant at her feet,
 "By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,
 285 By this last temple, by the golden age,
 By great Apollo, thy dear foster child,
 And by thy self, forlorn divinity,
 The pale Omega⁸ of a wither'd race,
 Let me behold, according as thou said'st,
 290 What in thy brain so ferments to and fro."—
 No sooner had this conjuration pass'd
 My devout lips, than side by side we stood,
 (Like a stunt bramble by a solemn pine)
 Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,⁹
 295 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star.
 Onward I look'd beneath the gloomy boughs,
 And saw, what first I thought an image huge,
 Like to the image pedestal'd so high
 300 In Saturn's temple. Then Moneta's voice
 Came brief upon mine ear,—“So Saturn sat
 When he had lost his realms.”—Whereon there grew
 A power within me of enormous ken,^o *range of vision*
 To see as a God sees, and take the depth
 305 Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
 Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
 At those few words hung vast before my mind,
 With half unravel'd web. I set myself
 Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
 310 And seeing ne'er forget. No stir of life
 Was in this shrouded vale, not so much air
 As in the zoning^o of a summer's day *course*
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
 But where the deaf leaf fell there did it rest:
 315 A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
 By reason of the fallen divinity
 Spreading more shade: the Naiad^o mid her reeds *water nymph*
 Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.
 Along the margin sand large footmarks went
 320 No farther than to where old Saturn's feet

8. The final letter of the Greek alphabet.
 9. This had been the opening line of the original *Hyperion*. The rest of the poem is a revised version of part of that first narrative, with the poet

now represented as allowed to envision the course of events that Moneta recalls in her memory (lines 282, 289–90).

Had rested, and there slept, how long a sleep!
 Degraded, cold, upon the sodden ground
 His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
 Unsceptred; and his realmless¹ eyes were clos'd,
 325 While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the Earth,
 His antient mother,² for some comfort yet.
 It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
 But there came one who with a kindred hand
 Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
 330 With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
 Then came the griev'd voice of Mnemosyne,³
 And griev'd I hearken'd. “That divinity
 Whom thou saw'st step from yon forlornest wood,
 And with slow pace approach our fallen King,
 335 Is Thea,⁴ softest-natur'd of our brood.”
 I mark'd the goddess in fair statuary
 Surpassing wan Moneta by the head,⁵
 And in her sorrow nearer woman's tears.
 There was a listening fear in her regard,
 340 As if calamity had but begun;
 As if the vanward clouds⁶ of evil days
 Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
 Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
 One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
 345 Where beats the human heart; as if just there,
 Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain;
 The other upon Saturn's bended neck
 She laid, and to the level of his hollow ear
 Leaning, with parted lips, some words she spake
 350 In solemn tenor and deep organ tune;
 Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
 Would come in this-like accenting; how frail
 To that large utterance of the early Gods!—
 “Saturn! look up—and for what, poor lost King?⁷
 355 I have no comfort for thee, no—not one:
 I cannot cry, *Wherefore thus sleepest thou?*
 For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
 Knows thee not, so afflicted, for a God;
 And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
 360 Has from thy sceptre pass'd, and all the air
 Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
 Thy thunder, captious^o at the new command, *quarrelsome*
 Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
 And thy sharp lightning in unpracticed hands

1. Saturn's eyes, when open, express the fact that he has lost his realm.
 2. Saturn and the other Titans were the children of heaven and Earth.
 3. As in 2.50, Keats substitutes for “Moneta” the “Mnemosyne” of the first *Hyperion*. This may be a slip but more likely indicates an alternative name for Moneta, in her role as participant in, as well as commentator on, the tragic action.

4. Sister and wife of Hyperion.
 5. I.e., Thea was a head taller than Moneta.
 6. The front line of clouds.
 7. Keats several times recalls King Lear in representing the condition of Saturn. Keats's contemporaries may have thought, too, of George III, mad, blind, and dethroned by his son, who had become prince regent.

365 Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
 With such remorseless speed still come new woes
 That unbelief has not a space to breathe.⁸
 Saturn, sleep on:—Me thoughtless,⁹ why should I
 Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
 370 Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
 Saturn, sleep on, while at thy feet I weep.”

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
 Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,¹
 Dream, and so dream all night, without a noise,
 375 Save from one gradual solitary gust,
 Swelling upon the silence; dying off;
 As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
 So came these words, and went; the while in tears
 She press'd her fair large forehead to the earth,
 380 Just where her fallen hair might spread in curls,
 A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
 Long, long, those two were postured motionless,
 Like sculpture builded up upon the grave
 Of their own power. A long awful time
 385 I look'd upon them; still they were the same;
 The frozen God still bending to the earth,
 And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet;
 Moneta silent. Without stay or prop
 But my own weak mortality, I bore
 390 The load of this eternal quietude,
 The unchanging gloom, and the three fixed shapes
 Ponderous upon my senses a whole moon.
 For by my burning brain I measured sure
 Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
 395 And every day by day methought I grew
 More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I pray'd
 Intense, that death would take me from the vale
 And all its burthens. Gasping with despair
 Of change, hour after hour I curs'd myself:
 400 Until old Saturn rais'd his faded eyes,
 And look'd around, and saw his kingdom gone,
 And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
 And that fair kneeling Goddess at his feet.
 As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and leaves
 405 Fills forest dells with a pervading air
 Known to the woodland nostril, so the words
 Of Saturn fill'd the mossy glooms around,
 Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,
 And to the windings in the foxes' hole,
 410 With sad low tones, while thus he spake, and sent
 Strange musings to the solitary Pan.

“Moan, brethren, moan; for we are swallow'd up

8. That disbelief has not an instant to catch its breath.

9. I.e., how thoughtless I am!

1. The grander version in the first *Hyperion*,

1.72ff., reads: “As when, upon a tranced summer-night / Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods, / Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars, / Dream.”

And buried from all godlike exercise
 Of influence benign on planets pale,
 415 And peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
 And all those acts which deity supreme
 Doth ease its heart of love in. Moan and wail.
 Moan, brethren, moan; for lo! the rebel spheres
 Spin round, the stars their antient courses keep,
 420 Clouds still with shadowy moisture haunt the earth,
 Still suck their fill of light from sun and moon,
 Still buds the tree, and still the sea-shores murmur.
 There is no death in all the universe,
 No smell of death—there shall be death²—Moan, moan,
 425 Moan, Cybele,³ moan, for thy pernicious babes
 Have chang'd a God into a shaking palsy.
 Moan, brethren, moan; for I have no strength left,
 Weak as the reed—weak—feeble as my voice—
 O, O, the pain, the pain of feebleness.
 430 Moan, moan; for still I thaw—or give me help:
 Throw down those imps⁴ and give me victory.
 Let me hear other groans, and trumpets blown
 Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
 From the gold peaks of heaven's high piled clouds;
 435 Voices of soft proclaim,⁵ and silver stir *proclamation*
 Of strings in hollow shells; and let there be
 Beautiful things made new for the surprize
 Of the sky children.”—So he feebly ceas'd,
 With such a poor and sickly sounding pause,
 440 Methought I heard some old man of the earth
 Bewailing earthly loss; nor could my eyes
 And ears act with that pleasant unison of sense
 Which marries sweet sound with the grace of form,
 And dolorous accent from a tragic harp
 445 With large limb'd visions.⁵ More I scrutinized:
 Still fix'd he sat beneath the sable trees,
 Whose arms spread straggling in wild serpent forms,
 With leaves all hush'd: his awful presence there
 (Now all was silent) gave a deadly lie
 450 To what I erewhile heard: only his lips
 Trembled amid the white curls of his beard.
 They told the truth, though, round, the snowy locks
 Hung nobly, as upon the face of heaven
 A midday fleece of clouds. Thea arose
 455 And stretch'd her white arm through the hollow dark,
 Pointing some whither: whereat he too rose
 Like a vast giant seen by men at sea
 To grow pale from the waves at dull midnight.⁶
 They melted from my sight into the woods:

2. The passing of the Saturnian golden age (paralleled by Keats with the fable of the loss of Eden) has introduced suffering, and will also introduce death.

3. The wife of Saturn and mother of the Olympian gods, who have overthrown their parents.

4. I.e., his rebellious children, the Titans.

5. I.e., the narrator could not attach this speech, like that of a feebly complaining old mortal, to the visible form of the large-limbed god who uttered it.

6. I.e., like a giant who is seen at sea to emerge, pale, from the waves.

460 Ere I could turn, Moneta cried—"These twain
 Are speeding to the families of grief,
 Where roof'd in by black rocks they waste in pain,
 And darkness for no hope."—And she spake on,
 As ye may read who can unwearied pass
 465 Onward from the antichamber^o of this dream,
 Where even at the open doors awhile
 I must delay, and glean my memory
 Of her high phrase: perhaps no further dare.

entry room

Canto 2

"Mortal, that thou may'st understand aright,
 I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
 Making comparisons of earthly things;⁷
 Or thou might'st better listen to the wind,
 5 Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
 Though it blows legend-laden through the trees.
 In melancholy realms big tears are shed,
 More sorrow like to this, and such-like woe,
 Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe.
 10 The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
 Groan for the old allegiance once more,
 Listening in their doom for Saturn's voice.
 But one of our whole eagle-brood still keeps
 His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;
 15 Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
 Still sits, still snuffs the incense teeming up
 From man to the Sun's God: yet unsecure;
 For as upon the earth dire prodigies^o
 Fright and perplex, so also shudders he:
 20 Nor at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's even screech,
 Or the familiar visitings of one
 Upon the first toll of his passing bell:⁸
 But horrors portion'd^o to a giant nerve
 Make great Hyperion ache. His palace bright,
 25 Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
 And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
 Glares a blood red through all the thousand courts,
 Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries:
 And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
 30 Flush angrily: when he would taste the wreaths
 Of incense breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
 Instead of sweets, his ample palate takes
 Savour of poisonous brass, and metals sick.
 Wherefore when harbour'd in the sleepy west,

terrifying omens

proportioned

7. Cf. the angel Raphael's words as he begins to recount to Adam the history of the rebellion in heaven: "what surmounts the reach / Of human sense, I shall delineate so, / By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms" (*Paradise Lost* 5.571–73).

8. Lines 20–22 might be paraphrased: "Not, however, at such portents as a dog's howl or the

evening screech of the owl or with the well-known feelings ['visitings'] of someone when he hears the first stroke of his own death knell." It had been the English custom to ring the church bell when a person was close to death, to invite hearers to pray for his departing soul.

35 After the full completion of fair day,
 For rest divine upon exalted couch
 And slumber in the arms of melody,
 He paces through the pleasant hours of ease,
 With strides colossal, on from hall to hall;
 40 While, far within each aisle and deep recess,
 His winged minions^o in close clusters stand
 Amaz'd, and full of fear; like anxious men
 Who on a wide plain gather in sad troops,
 When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
 45 Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
 Goes, step for step, with Thea from yon woods,
 Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
 Is sloping to the threshold of the west.
 Thither we tend."—Now in clear light I stood,
 50 Reliev'd from the dusk vale. Mnemosyne
 Was sitting on a square edg'd polish'd stone,
 That in its lucid depth reflected pure
 Her priestess-garments. My quick eyes ran on
 From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
 55 Through bowers of fragrant and enwreath'd light,
 And diamond paved lustrous long arcades.
 Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion;
 His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
 And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
 60 That scar'd away the meek ethereal hours
 And made their dove-wings tremble: on he flared⁹

followers

July–Sept. 1819

1857

This living hand, now warm and capable¹

This living hand, now warm and capable
 Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
 And in the icy silence of the tomb,
 So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
 5 That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood,
 So in my veins red life might stream again,
 And thou be conscience-calm'd—see, here it is—
 I hold it towards you—

1819

1898

9. The manuscript breaks off at this point.

1. These lines, first published in H. B. Forman's edition of Keats's poems in 1898, were written on a sheet that later formed part of the draft of Keats's unfinished satire *The Jealousies*. They have been a key text in late-20th-century critical and theoretical discussions of interpretation. Readings range from the personal and autobiographical—Keats addressing a loved one (Fanny Brawne) or

his posthumous readers (e.g., users of this Norton anthology)—to the fictionalized and dramatic (e.g., a fragment of a speech intended for the deranged Ludolph toward the end of Keats's and Charles Brown's never-produced tragedy *Otho the Great*). In their lyric character the lines are included in anthologies of love poetry. In their dramatic character they are described by critics as, for example, "ghoulishly aggressive."