



Title	"Organic Happiness" versus "the vale of Soul-making" : Changing Attitudes towards the Struggle for Existence in the Romantic Age
Author(s)	Koguchi, Ichiro
Citation	言語文化研究. 2010, 36, p. 185-200
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/5330
rights	
Note	

The University of Osaka Institutional Knowledge Archive : OUKA

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

The University of Osaka

“Organic Happiness” versus “the vale of Soul-making”: Changing Attitudes towards the Struggle for Existence in the Romantic Age

Ichiro Koguchi

進化論における「生存競争」と「自然淘汰」は文学的テーマでもある。これらの概念は、Charles Darwinが科学用語として確立する前から、西欧文学にたびたび登場している。18世紀を代表する詩人であり、進化論の提唱者でもあったErasmus Darwin、そして19世紀初頭のロマン主義詩人であるJohn Keatsは、食物連鎖を扱う詩的イメージの中でこれらの概念に明確に言及している。しかし、彼らが「生存競争」や「自然淘汰」に向けるそれぞれのまなざしは根本的に異なる。本論文では、ダーウィンの*The Temple of Nature*、そしてキーツの“To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.”、*The Fall of Hyperion*、さらに手紙における発言などを考察することによって、調和した全体的システムの中に生存競争の痛みと死を吸収し、無化しようとするダーウィンの傾向と、生存競争の残酷さを認めつつ、あくまでも個々の主体において救済を求めようとするキーツの感受性の違いを明らかにする。さらに、この対立する詩的態度に、18世紀からロマン主義へと流れる、精神のありかたの時代的変遷を読みとる。

Keywords: struggle for existence, evolutionism, Romantic individualism

I

“To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.” may not be among John Keats’s finest works, but this verse epistle can nonetheless be recognised as quintessentially Keatsian. We observe in it some of the most significant issues that concerned the poet during his brief poetic career. Vision and reality, life and art, and the functions of poetic imagination—Keats speculates on these themes in the poem and endeavours to find an artistic perspective for them. Earlier studies have found that some of the important aspects of the poem, together with specific imagery and wording, developed into more mature poetic expressions in such later works as “Ode to a Nightingale” and “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (Visick; Gérard 215-36). “To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.” can be regarded as a seminal work that anticipates Keats in his finest artistic phase.

A poet who died young of degenerative disease, Keats in his final years was haunted by the idea of mortality. Indeed, the idea dominates the ending part of “To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.” and serves to

set the poem's tone of anxiousness and uncertainty. In his other poems and in his letters, too, the poet writes on human mortality, but here he expands his scope. He contemplates the cruel predation inherent in the food chain, in which stronger creatures feed on the weaker. The poem, in short, strongly concerns itself with such issues as mortality, suffering and evil by taking up the struggle for existence in the natural world.

Keats's attitude towards these notions can be illuminated by comparing it with that of Erasmus Darwin. In his poem *The Temple of Nature*, Darwin deals with these same issues, but the views of Keats and Darwin are quite contrastive. While the younger poet is deeply distressed by the death and suffering of victims in the food chain, the older calmly accepts these facts and puts forward a world-view in which mortality and evil are ultimately offset by ever-increasing happiness. Keats sympathises with individual creatures crushed under the cruel reality of nature, but Darwin, in contrast, looks at nature as a totality and considers that the problem of mortality and individual suffering can be subsumed and nullified in this holistic system.

This disparity in attitude may be ascribed to the dissimilar personalities of the two poets. However, more significantly, the difference can also be due to the changing climate of thought around the Romantic age. Darwin lived from 1731 to 1802, and Keats, from 1795 to 1821. A rather drastic shift in attitude towards mortality, suffering and evil might have been occurring around the turn of the nineteenth century, and this could have been behind the contrastive views of those two poets. In this paper, I shall clarify the nature of this difference with reference to the contextual change in thought and sensibility occurring from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.

The idea of the struggle for existence is the main focus of my discussion. This may be a favourite topic for humanities studies focusing on the mid nineteenth century and later, but it does not seem to be a popular subject in Romantic studies. "To J. H. Reynolds, Esq." was once scrutinised by Hoxie N. Fairchild in terms of the Western concept of the struggle for existence. Pursuant to his aim, Fairchild concentrated on shared features of Keats and other literary thinkers including Erasmus Darwin. The uniqueness of Keats and the difference of Romantic thinking from that of other ages, however, are largely left untouched by Fairchild. A possible influence of Darwin's biological treatise *Zoonomia* on Keats's verse epistle was hinted by Donald M. Hassler (109), but he stopped short of discussing it. The present paper is intended to complement earlier critical studies by examining how Keats deviates from Darwin's eighteenth-century formulation of the idea of the struggle for existence. Hopefully, this approach can contribute to a better understanding of Keats's uniqueness and the characteristics of British Romanticism.

I shall start with a brief comparison of Keats and Darwin by quoting lines from "To J. H. Reynolds, Esq." and from *The Temple of Nature*. I shall then investigate Darwin's view of the struggle for existence in greater detail, referring to *The Temple of Nature* as well as some of his

prose treatises. A particular emphasis will be laid on Darwin’s view of religious salvation, which claims that terrestrial ills will ultimately be cancelled out by the benevolent system of nature. Additionally, I shall discuss eighteenth-century optimism and evolutionism in relation to his thought on salvation. After Darwin, I shall proceed to Keats, intending to indicate how Darwin’s redemptive perspective was no longer valid for the younger poet. Keats’s concept of “the vale of Soul-making” will then be examined in order to bring to light his own system of salvation, which, unlike Darwin’s, prioritises the personal experience of individual human beings. For supporting evidence, I shall discuss a similar vision of redemption that Keats developed in his two Hyperion epics.

In the concluding section, I shall offer a brief look at Alfred Tennyson’s famous line “Nature, red in tooth and claw” from *In Memoriam* and John Clare’s nature poetry. The former is a Victorian attempt to face the cruelty of the natural world largely in a Keatsian manner, and the latter shows a more objective, more serene perspective to deal with the same problem. In Clare we might read an alternative view, which is more readily acceptable in the secular cultural milieu of our present time.

II

On 25 March 1818, John Keats wrote a verse letter to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds. After writing about poetic imagery, Claude Lorrain’s painting, dreams and illusions, in the closing section, he begins rather abruptly to speculate on distressful scenes in nature:

. . . I saw
Too far into the sea—where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore . . .
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction. . . .
.....
Still do I that most fierce destruction see:
The shark at savage prey, the hawk at pounce,
The gentle robin, like a pard or ounce,
Ravening a worm. . . (93-97, 102-05)

Keats in these lines is remarkably sensitive to the cruelty of the food chain. His distress is visible in the repetition of the strong phrase, “fierce destruction.” He makes this emotional response more explicit in the same poem:

It is a flaw
In happiness to see beyond our bourn—
It forces us in summer skies to mourn;
It spoils the singing of the nightingale. (82-85)

The poet sympathised so strongly with the victims of nature’s economy that, when he meditated on these scenes, he was feeling far removed from happiness (98), and later, while composing poetical

lines on them, he was still “sick of it” (99) and in “horrid moods” (105).

His sensitivity to the cruelty of predation is not surprising. Indeed, thoughts of mortality were constantly on his mind. When he was writing the above passages, he was at the bedside of his terminally ill brother, Tom. Keats had also lost his parents and several of his friends and relatives by 1818. Further, as Marilyn Gaull explains, death and mortality were felt particularly strongly in the Romantic age; political upheavals, poor harvests and inadequate attention to hygiene, as well as frequent newspaper reports on tragic incidents, made death a familiar fact of life (218-19). It was perhaps natural that Keats should be haunted by the idea of mortality, human or otherwise, and should compose upon this theme.

If we place Keats beside Erasmus Darwin, however, we find a somewhat different perspective for looking at this verse epistle. Preoccupation with death and suffering is not unique to Keats or to the sensibility of the Romantic age. It is, rather, a development of a tradition rooted in Western culture. In the fourth canto of *The Temple of Nature* (1803), Darwin writes lines closely resembling Keats's in theme and imagery:

The wolf, escorted by his milk-drawn dam,
Unknown to mercy, tears the guiltless lamb;
The towering eagle, darting from above,
Unfeeling rends the inoffensive dove;
The lamb and dove on living nature feed,
Crop the young herb, or crush the embryo seed.
Nor spares the loud owl in her dusky flight,
Smit with sweet notes, the minstrel of the night;
Nor spares enamour'd of his radiant form,
The hungry nightingale the glowing worm;
Who with bright lamp alarms the midnight hour,
Climbs the green stem, and slays the sleeping flower. (4. 17-28)

Darwin's perspective is more extensive than Keats's. But both poets take up the same subject matter, and both refer to raptors and smaller birds as predators, and to worms as preys. The next quotation from Darwin describes aquatic creatures like Keats's shark:

The shark rapacious with descending blow
Darts on the scaly brood, that swims below;
The crawling crocodiles, beneath that move,
Arrest with rising jaw the tribes above;
With monstrous gape sepulchral whales devour
Shoals at a gulp, a million in an hour. (4. 57-62)

As demonstrated by Fairchild, representing the struggle for existence in poetry is an established tradition, and Darwin and Keats clearly subscribe to it (111-12).

Nevertheless, differences between *The Temple of Nature* and Keats's verse epistle are notable. In contrast to Keats's emotional response to cruel scenes in the food chain, Darwin's attitude is

that of a detached observer. Keats feels deep distress through emotional identification with the victims of the struggle for existence. But Darwin, facing similar sights, seems to be content with allegorical abstraction: “In ocean’s pearly haunts, the waves beneath / Sits the grim monarch of insatiate Death” (4. 55-56). Although seemingly struck by “One scene of blood, one mighty tomb” (4. 64), his feelings are not seriously threatened by creatures’ suffering or death. While Keats was overwhelmed by emotions and stopped writing after composing merely twenty lines on nature’s cruelty, Darwin calmly went on describing the same struggle. He even narrates the “vegetable war” (*Temple of Nature* 4. 42), or competition for nutrition and sunlight among plants.

The disparity in the two poets’ mindset is curious, considering they were near contemporaries. The next section will discuss Darwin’s view of suffering and mortality, aiming to find philosophical principles that supported his attitude.

III

Like his grandson Charles, Erasmus Darwin was a proponent of biological evolution; his theory is extensively set out in *The Temple of Nature*. According to the elder Darwin, the birth of organic beings was in the primeval ocean:

Organic Life beneath the shoreless waves
Was born and nurs’d in Ocean’s pearly caves;
First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,
Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass;
These, as successive generations bloom,
New powers acquire, and larger limbs assume;
Whence countless groups of vegetation spring,
And breathing realms of fin, and feet, and wing. (1. 295-302)

All organisms, including mankind, originated from the same primeval being, as Darwin says that “the tall Oak” (1. 303), “The Whale” (1. 305), “The lordly Lion” (1. 306), “The Eagle” (1. 307) and “man” (1. 309), all “Arose from rudiments of form and sense, / An embryo point, or microscopic ens” (1. 313-14).

Although, unlike his grandson, Darwin does not use the phrase “struggle for existence” or “natural selection,” these ideas are tacit but important assumptions in his theory. In *Zoonomia*, he claims that desire is the cause of the transformations of living things. There he subdivides desire into three categories: “lust, hunger, and [desire for] security” (1. 503). These three kinds of desire drive the gradual process of biological progress, and natural selection is implied in the operation of these desires.

In *The Temple of Nature*, the role of sexual desire, or “lust,” is prominent in evolution, for the poem states that improvement of species results partly from hetero-sexual reproduction. At

the initial stages of evolution, asexual reproduction is the only means of producing offspring: "Unknown to sex the pregnant oyster swells, / And coral-insects build their radiate shells" (2. 89-90). But this form of reproduction necessarily entails "hereditary ills" (2. 164) and "feeble births" (2. 165). Finally, "Death extinguish[es] the degenerate race" (2. 166). Hence in many species, it is eventually replaced by sexual reproduction. Heterosexuality, thus introduced, is accompanied by what Desmond King-Hele calls "sexual selection" (299). In *Zoonomia*, Darwin holds that the males of some species combat each other for "exclusive possession of the females" (1. 503), with the outcome that "the strongest and most active animal should propagate the species, which should thence become improved" (1. 503). This is not a far cry from the concepts of natural selection and the struggle for existence.

Similarly, hunger and desire for security drive the process of evolution. Hunger, according to *Zoonomia*, "has diversified the forms of all species of animals" (1. 503) by making them adapt to the specific kinds of foods they consume. These diverse forms include the hardened nose of the swine, the trunk of the elephant, the rough tongue and palate of cattle, and the various shapes of birds' beaks (1. 503). Desire for security has varied the outward shapes and colours of creatures to elude enemies: birds' wings and tortoises' shells are examples (1. 504). The ideas of the struggle for existence and natural selection are thus implied in Darwin's view of evolution. It is hardly surprising that he should recount in detail the ruthless processes of the natural food chain in his poetry. In this sense, nature can be rightly called "one great Slaughter-house" (*Temple of Nature* 4. 66).

However, this pessimistic picture is only half-truth. Darwin has ultimately concluded that despite localised ills and sufferings, the world as a whole will eventually be filled with bliss. The misery of mortality and pain is destined to be overpowered and cancelled out by pleasure and happiness. Along with the notion of the struggle for existence, this optimistic view is inherent in his evolutionary theory.

Darwin believes that the sum total of happiness does not diminish even by the death and suffering that living organisms undergo. He is convinced that death is not merely an evil but also a change of form that promises good for the rising generation. After organisms die, the matter that composed their bodies is handed down to following generations:

. . . when a Monarch or a mushroom dies,
 Awhile extinct the organic matter lies;
 But, as a few short hours or years revolve,
 Alchemic powers the changing mass dissolve;
 Born to new life unnumber'd insects pant,
 New buds surround the microscopic plant. (*Temple of Nature* 4. 383-88)

By such processes, "Renascent joys" (4. 391) emerge in newly born insects and buds. This means

that the happiness felt by a generation of living things is inherited by their offspring:

Emerging matter from the grave returns,
Feels new desires, with new sensations burns;
With youth's first bloom a finer sense acquires,
And Loves and Pleasures fan the rising fires. — (4. 399-402)

The total amount of joy and happiness does not merely remain the same, Darwin asserts, but it is ever on the increase (Footnote to 4. 410). This is probably because the population of organisms becomes successively larger, and the amount of happiness increases correspondingly. He observes that species are surprisingly prolific (4. 347-65), and they are “increasing by successive birth” (4. 377) until they “o’erpeople ocean, air, and earth” (4. 378). This increase in the happiness of organic beings is also because of the mechanism intrinsic in the conversion of organic matter from older to newer generations. As newborns can take nutrients directly from the organic remains of previous generations, which are easier to digest and more nutritious than inorganic substances, the living power of freshly born organisms becomes greater:

. . . as those remains of former life are not again totally decomposed, or converted into their original elements, they supply more copious food . . . which consists of materials convertible into nutriment with less labour or activity of the digestive powers; and hence the quantity or number of organized bodies, and their improvement in size, as well as their happiness, has been continually increasing. . . . (Footnote to 4. 453)

In addition, the process of natural selection itself augments the amount of happiness. In *Phytologia*, a treatise on plants, Darwin admits that nature seems to be dominated by the “Eat or be eaten” principle (556). But despite this apparent mercilessness, he argues that this world proves to be benevolent if we adopt a more comprehensive perspective:

By this contrivance [the food chain in nature] more pleasurable sensation exists in the world, as the organized matter is taken from a state of less irritability and less sensibility, and converted into a state of greater. (557)

More active and more highly sentient creatures, which are more likely to survive in the course of evolution, have a greater capacity for pleasure. The evolutionary struggle for existence maximises the total amount of pleasure and happiness.

Darwin, through this theorising, redefines his own idea of nature. The natural world, a large proportion of which is made of the remains of organic life, is now considered “A Mighty Monuments of Past Delight” (4. 450). With this world picture in which happiness is ever increasing, he goes so far as to advance a vision of redemption: death is “vanquish’d,” “Happiness survives,” “Life increasing peoples every clime,” and “young Renascent Nature conquers Time” (4. 452, 453, 454).

It should be noted that in Darwin’s redemptive view, individual lives are not foregrounded. His attention is drawn to nature as a totality and to the sum total of happiness in the whole world.

Individual beings' mortality and their existential fear are not highlighted, let alone the suffering that each creature is subjected to. This attitude is typical of eighteenth-century optimism as defined by Arthur O. Lovejoy.

Optimism is one of the characteristics of eighteenth-century thinking; as a philosophical doctrine, it signifies more than hopefulness for the future. According to Lovejoy, eighteenth-century optimism holds that the world as it is exists in the best of metaphysically possible states. But, curiously, this view implies neither the happiness nor the excellence of individual parts of the whole system. The perfection of the whole, on the contrary, consists in the existence of every possible degree of imperfection in the parts (Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being* 208, 211). Soame Jennyns, an eighteenth-century thinker, denying a perfect whole built on the perfection of its parts, claims that "the sufferings of individuals are absolutely necessary to universal happiness" (89). The following extract from William King neatly summarises the eighteenth-century effort to harmonise God's infinite goodness, the benevolence of nature and local evils in the actual world:

[God's] infinite goodness . . . obliged him to produce external things; which things, since they could not possibly be perfect, the divine goodness preferred imperfect ones to none at all. Imperfection then arose from the infinity of divine goodness. (82)

Given such features of optimism, it seems reasonable to regard Darwin's position as a version of this eighteenth-century thought. Darwin pays attention to creatures' mortality and the pains that they are destined to suffer; however, like his optimist predecessors, he subsumes these local ills in a broader system. For Jennyns and King, this system is benevolent nature and divine goodness; for Darwin it is biological evolution and the larger scheme of redemption in which the joys of life will eventually prevail.

In contrast to popular usage, optimism is a static concept. It considers the present state of the world as the best possible; it does not necessarily mean confidence about the future. Onto this static concept, Darwin grafted the temporal principle of biological evolution.

IV

We have seen that the lines describing the struggle for existence in *The Temple of Nature* resemble the concluding part of Keats's "To J. H. Reynolds, Esq." The resemblance is so notable that Donald Hassler speculates on Darwin's direct influence on Keats (109). Indeed, Darwin was one of the most highly appreciated poets of his age (King-Hele 237-40), and Keats mentioned Darwin, although dismissively, in one of his letters (*Letters* 1. 113). It must have been difficult for any young poet of Keats's time to ignore this older poet. The medical profession, in which both poets were engaged, is another possible link.

However, the difference in attitude between these two poets is more striking than their similarity.

As discussed above, suffering and death amid the struggle for existence are justified in Darwin's thinking by the concept of the ever-increasing happiness of organic life. Individual pain and death are minor elements in this overall scheme. But Keats clearly rejected this view. For him, suffering and mortality are personal issues. The total amount of happiness in the world can never offset such tragic feelings as he had while meditating on the cruelty of the food chain. Keats needed to find a way to justify mortality and evil at a personal and emotional level. Otherwise the reality of the world would only cause him anxiety and despair: "from happiness I far was gone. / Still am I sick of it" ("To J. H. Reynolds, Esq." 98-99).

Keats's endeavour to cope with this problem led to the conception of "the vale of Soul-making" (*Letters* 2. 102). Here he puts forward a system of salvation, which is at significant variance with Darwin's idea of the happiness of organic life. Whereas the older poet is interested in the world as a whole, Keats is exclusively concerned with how each human being can be saved. The "vale of Soul-making" also appears to differ from Darwin's thinking in that Keats focuses on humans, not living things in general. However, he elsewhere treats the human being and other animals, such as "the Hawk," "the Robin" and "the Lion" (2. 79), in the same perspective (Fairchild 102). He also emphasises that the human being is "subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest" (*Letters* 2. 101). Hence the poet probably thought that, as a participant in the struggle for existence, the human being need not be discriminated from other creatures.

In "the vale of Soul-making," Keats is determined to reject the traditional idea of the world as "a vale of tears" (*Letters* 2. 101). Instead, he reconsiders it as a place for each human being to become a truly individual, conscious existence, or a "soul." Three "Materials" are necessary for this soul-making: "the *Intelligence*," "the *human heart*," and "the *World or Elemental space*" (2. 102). Intelligences, according to Keats, are "sparks of the divinity" (2. 102); the intelligence can thus be regarded as a human being's inchoate consciousness, the ultimate origin of which is in the spiritual or divine realm. An intelligence becomes a soul only when it can be "personally itself" (2. 102), i.e., when it can acquire its own identity. The "World" is "a School" (2. 102) for the intelligence, and the "human heart" is "the *horn Book* used in that School" (2. 102). Keats's system of soul-making seems to signify that each intelligence acquires its personal identity so as to become a soul by gaining experiences in the world. The human heart, endowed with feeling and perception, is the medium of this learning process. Since Keats considers the world full of misery, it follows that "a World of Pains and troubles" is necessary "to school an Intelligence and make it a soul" (2. 102).

Keats does not elaborate specifically how his concept of soul-making brings salvation. He only hints that a spiritual joy, or "a bliss peculiar to each ones individual existence" (2. 102), can be attained when an intelligence becomes a soul. But his real point is probably elsewhere. Considering the great emphasis he places on the process of soul-making, it is most probable that, in

his system, the attainment of the state of soul is itself a salvation. When embryonic consciousness has developed into an individual soul, it is saved. Salvation for Keats, in other words, is the establishment of individual identity. Infants, if they die very early, cannot reach the stage of soul-making. Keats deals with this quandary by having them directly return to God: "In them the Spark or intelligence returns to God without any identity" (2. 103).

This personal salvation myth is in conflict with Darwin's redemptive scheme. Darwin addresses himself to the problem of salvation by annihilating individual sufferings and deaths against the larger context of evolution. Keats takes exactly the opposite view. The tragic side of life can in no way be absorbed in a larger system. Salvation resides in the process of each human being undergoing painful life and becoming personally itself. Individuation is all for Keats.

The "vale of Soul-making" was written in the spring of 1819. Later in the same year, the poet was faced with the same problem of pain and mortality in his famous odes. In these he is acutely aware of the mortal nature of humanity and the temporariness of beauty. His answer to the problem is "Ode on Melancholy," in which the highest pleasure lies not in the transcendence of the earthly, but in intense contemplation of the ephemeral beauty of the world (Mellor 85). This poem can be described as an aesthetic version of "the vale of Soul-making."

The theme of soul-making and salvation is again featured in his two epic attempts, *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. It is known that the structures of these unfinished poems are modelled on John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Haworth 638, Sperry). Among the Miltonic features of these poems, the concept of *felix culpa* is probably the most important thematic element. As shown in Lovejoy's classic exposition, Milton's *Paradise Lost* is constituted around the paradoxical idea of the "fortunate fall" (Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* 277-79). The Fall from the Garden of Eden may be a tragic experience, but mankind can regain the height of Paradise in its eventual achievement of the New Jerusalem. Hence the Fall is "fortunate" for mankind; it is not merely tragic but a necessary step for human redemption. Keats's two *Hyperion* epics follow this fundamental pattern.

In *Hyperion*, the earlier of the two epic attempts, many of the episodes and characters have their counterparts in *Paradise Lost*. The Titans' fall from power corresponds with the fall of the rebellious angels and that of Adam and Eve; the giant race's fierce debate reminds us of the Pandemonium; Apollo, who experiences a severe ordeal before being deified, is comparable to Christ; and as the Titans submit to the new order of the Olympian gods, so Christ's new law supersedes that of Moses (Haworth 641-43).

The notion of progress is inherent in the idea of the fortunate fall. *Hyperion* is strongly concerned with this notion. Observing the development of human consciousness from the age of Milton to that of Wordsworth, Keats, in a letter, declares his trust in the progress of mankind: "the general and gregarious advance of intellect" (1. 281), and "a grand march of intellect" (1. 282). The successors

of the Titans’ regime, the Olympian gods, are described as “purer life” (2. 211), “fresh perfection” (2. 212) and “A power more strong in beauty” (2. 213). In the world where “’tis the eternal law / That first in beauty should be first in might” (2. 228-29), it seems only natural that the Olympians should dethrone the giant race.

Interestingly, this idea of progress does not console the defeated Titans. Even after the above “eternal law” has been proposed to them, their intense sense of suffering is not lightened. The linear development of the whole world, a Darwinian concept, is powerless in the face of their individual anguish.

A hint of redemption is suggested in Apollo’s apotheosis. In the third book, the juvenile Apollo is deified by acquiring vast knowledge with the help of the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne. This is also a momentous ordeal for the young god; with a sudden influx of knowledge, he is seized by a wild commotion and a fierce convulsion. The pain he suffers is like “the struggle at the gate of death” (3. 126). Salvation, not allowed to the fallen Titans, is thus partly realised through the sudden maturation of Apollo’s mind. In other words, like “the vale of Soul-making,” saving power materialises only internally in the growth of individual consciousness. In this sense Keats’s epic is a subjective version of Milton’s *felix culpa*.

This internal orientation is more evident in the revised version of the poem, *The Fall of Hyperion*. Here the role of Apollo is taken over by the “dreamer,” the narrator of the poem. A mere human being, the dreamer himself goes through ordeals and finally, like Apollo, reaches a higher stage of recognition.

The Fall of Hyperion consists of the narrator’s movement through a series of spaces: he first comes to a garden surrounded by “trees of every clime” (1. 19); next he finds himself inside a stately temple, or “old sanctuary” (1. 62); then, ordered by the goddess Moneta, he ascends the stairs of the altar in the temple; and finally he enters the mind of Moneta (Taniuchi). The dreamer’s movement is constantly inward: from the open space of the wood, through the inside of the temple, and to the ultimate internal dimension, “the dark secret chambers of her [Moneta’s] skull” (1. 275).

As I mentioned above, this later poem, too, is based on the pattern of *felix culpa*. Stuart Sperry has found convincing evidence that the allegory and structure of *Paradise Lost* are used in *The Fall of Hyperion*. The first vision of the garden and the copious woods resembles the description of Paradise in Milton’s epic. The dreamer eating fruits and losing consciousness can be compared to the Fall caused by the same behaviour of Eve. The black gate in the east shut against the sunrise is probably based on the portrayal of the eastern gate of Paradise after Adam and Eve have been expelled. As Moneta commands the dreamer to ascend the steps of the altar, so the angel Michael orders Adam and Eve to climb a hill. The dreamer entreats the goddess to “purge off . . . my mind’s film” (1. 145-46), and his request is granted. Likewise Michael removes a film from Adam’s eyes;

here Milton, too, uses the word “purged” (*Paradise Lost* 11. 414). Adam gains a vision from the mountain; and like him, Keats’s narrator on the height of the altar acquires “enormous ken, / To see as a god sees” (1. 303). The dreamer of *The Fall of Hyperion* may have committed the sin of craving for more-than-human knowledge, but it is an expiable sin, a Miltonic kind of *felix culpa* that brings higher good (Sperry 78-79, 81-83).

The allegorical structure and the spatial movement of *The Fall of Hyperion* can be further explicated by comparing it to Keats’s theoretical discussion of the growth of human consciousness. In one of his letters, the poet compares human life with a “large Mansion of Many Apartments” (1. 280). As a human being grows, he passes through rooms in this mansion one by one. Human consciousness starts from “the infant or thoughtless Chamber” (1. 280); it then proceeds to “the Chamber of Maiden-Thought” (1. 281), which is characterised by bright light and intense pleasure; after this chamber has gradually grown dim, the human mind goes on to “dark Passages” (1. 281), where, feeling the mystery of life, it still explores its way forward.

The artistic meaning of this personal allegory has been variously discussed, but attention should be drawn to the fact that human consciousness moves into deeper levels and it also goes downward, as signified by the increasing dimness of each space. Since human consciousness inevitably acquires experience and knowledge while making its way through these dark spaces, implications of transgression inhere in the movement of consciousness. *The Fall of Hyperion* likewise, by suggesting a similar process of human development, traces the same inward-downward path. The poem’s downward orientation, in accordance with the pattern of the fortunate fall, is thematically suggested by the narrator’s act of transgression: his eating fruits and desire for more-than-human knowledge.

However, downward is not the only orientation that the poem takes. Unlike the “Mansion of Many Apartments,” which has yet to find signs of redemption, *The Fall of Hyperion* comprises an upward movement and hints of salvation. Before the dreamer is allowed to learn what is inside Moneta’s mind, he must ascend the steps of Moneta’s altar. This is an excruciating ordeal. The task seems “Prodigious” (1. 121), and even before gaining the lowest step, he is struck by a “palsied chill” (1. 122) which threatens to terminate his pulse. He is tormented by “sharp anguish” (1. 126). It is not until he steps on the lowest of the stairs that he feels life revive in his body. Only then can he mount the stairs. The rewards he is given are the knowledge inside Moneta’s mind, or “What in thy brain so ferments to and fro” (1. 290), and “enormous ken / To see as a god sees” (1. 303-04). After this point, the story of the Titans fall, recounted already in the first *Hyperion*, follows.

In the earlier version, Apollo introduces elements of redemption. In the later, salvation is foreshadowed and perhaps partially achieved by the dreamer’s ascent of the altar and the resultant semi-apotheosis that enables him to “see as a god sees” (1. 304). If we go back to the issue of pain

and mortality and that of their justification in Keats, we understand that *The Fall of Hyperion*, too, is an exploration of the problem that the poet tries to deal with in “the vale of Soul-making.” In the pattern of the fortunate fall, the scenes of transgression and extreme anguish are followed by the final attainment of a god-like perspective.

As I stated earlier, *The Fall of Hyperion* shows an even more strongly internal orientation than *Hyperion*. This is indicated by the importance assigned to the narrator. In *Hyperion*, the story is told objectively by an omniscient narrator whose presence is invisible to the reader. *The Fall of Hyperion*, on the other hand, foregrounds the narrator by imparting to him the role of the protagonist of the story. Each scene of the poem is his subjective experience. While *Hyperion*’s crucial moment, the ordeal and deification of Apollo, is recounted from a detached, third-person perspective, the later version’s significant moment, the dreamer’s desperate struggle at Moneta’s altar, is represented as a first-hand experience of the narrator himself. *The Fall of Hyperion* is concerned with the subjective realm of mind more explicitly than its predecessor.

Thus, in Keats’s last epic attempt, the problem of terrestrial suffering is more fully internalised. By transferring the narrative of a fall, suffering and salvation into the individual psyche, this poem provides a further exploration of “the vale of Soul-making.” Salvation for Keats is a personal matter. It can be attained by individual human consciousness when it achieves personal identity and becomes a soul. And this achievement is possible only by going through a process of pain and suffering. With this philosophy of soul-making, it would have been difficult for Keats to accept Erasmus Darwin’s notion of collective redemption. Individual sufferings and deaths may be nullified in the metaphysical system of the older poet. But this does not make any sense for the younger Romantic, who wishes to be a true poet “to whom the miseries of the world / Are misery, and will not let them rest” (*Fall of Hyperion* 1. 148-49).

Both Darwin and Keats wrote poetic passages on the struggle for existence among creatures. Their attitudes, though, sharply differ. As my reading of *The Temple of Nature* and other works of Darwin indicates, this eighteenth-century poet seeks ultimate harmony in the metaphysical totality of the world. The problem of pain and mortality is specious; they are merely localised disruptions which ultimately contribute to the good of the whole system of nature. Keats, in contrast, is not content with Darwinian thinking and develops his own salvation myth in the internal realm of individual consciousness.

A great deal of critical effort has gone into distinguishing literary Neo-classicism from Romanticism, and eighteenth-century sensibility from that of the early nineteenth century. This paper, by establishing Darwin’s collectivism and Keats’s individualism, may hopefully contribute to this critical endeavour.

V

In closing, I shall briefly look at two other poets who grappled with the issue of pain and death: Alfred Lord Tennyson and John Clare. Tennyson, in a sense, shows an extension of Keats's individualism in the Victorian age. But Clare presents a truly alternative view. As I shall suggest below, Clare's stance may be closer to our present-day attitude.

Tennyson published *In Memoriam* in 1850, to commemorate the death of Arthur Henry Hallam. The poem is the sincerest expression of Tennyson's mourning confronted with the loss of his dearest friend. However, with its length extending to more than a hundred and thirty sections, this series of elegies becomes more than a lament for the dead; Tennyson's philosophical inquiry into the meaning of life and religious salvation is developed in great detail.

In an earlier section of the poem, Tennyson appears to be on the side of Darwin. Evil is local, and the totality of nature is presided over by the good will of God; like Darwin, Tennyson says, "good / Will be the final goal of ill" (54. 1-2). He comes close to the belief that every death or suffering contributes to the whole; thus life is eventually recompensed:

. . . not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain. (54. 6-12)

Yet Tennyson is ultimately unconvinced by this view; he confesses that he is drawn to a far more sceptical perspective: "Nature, red in tooth and claw" (56. 15). His doubt is brought on by contemporary science. According to the biology and geology of his day, species as well as their individual members were tragically liable to death and extinction. Tennyson cannot escape from the influence of this world-view: ". . . of fifty seeds / She [Nature] often brings but one to bear" (55. 11-12); "She cries, 'A thousand types are gone: I care for nothing, all shall go'" (56. 3-4).

The time was the mid-Victorian period, and no longer was there such metaphysical consolation as was available for Darwin. Departing from metaphysics, science was being re-established in observation and demonstration. By defining the world first as a seemingly benevolent system where every life is cared for, and then as a cruel order that leaves each human being struggling in anxiety and despair, Tennyson's poem seems to epitomise the historical transition from Darwin's view to Keats's sensibility.

Born in 1793, John Clare was Keats's contemporary. A "peasant poet" rooted in the soil, he is exempt from transcendentalist tendencies which pervade the thinking of many Romantics. Composing mostly poetry of nature, he often encounters actual struggles for existence among

creatures. However, he does not have recourse to a metaphysical system; rather, his attitude is cool acceptance. I quote from *Shepherd's Calendar*:

In the barn hole sits the cat
Watching within the thirsty rat
Who oft at morn its dwelling leaves
To drink the moisture from the eves
The redbreast with his nimble eye
Dare scarcely stop to catch the flye
That tangled in the spiders snare
Mourns in vain for freedom there. (“September” 74-82)

As James McKusick argues, here and elsewhere Clare is aware of predator-prey relationships, describing them with a degree of sympathy, but without undue sentimentality; the poet is clearly aware of the role of predation in maintaining the balance of the ecological system of nature (83-84). McKusick also alludes to similarly tense interactions between young foxes and blackbirds in Clare's “The Vixen” (84).

Clare's eye on scenes of predation is objective and secular; but his attitude is also a sympathetic appreciation of life in the biological sphere. His viewpoint is thus subtly different from Darwin and Keats, and perhaps closer to our present-day sensibility. If Clare is able to come to terms with “Nature, red in tooth and claw” by assuming this attitude, he may well be a significant model for twenty-first-century sensibilities.

Works Cited

- Clare, John. *Poems of the Middle Period 1822-1837*. Ed. Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- Darwin, Erasmus. *Phytologia; or the Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening*. 1800. Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004.
- . *The Temple of Nature*. The Poetical Works of Erasmus Darwin Vol. 3. 1806. Tokyo: Hon-No-Tomosha, 1997. 1-186.
- . *Zoonomia; or, the Laws of Organic Life*. Vol. 1. 1794. New York: AMS, 1974.
- Fairchild, Hoxie N. “Keats and the Struggle-for-Existence Tradition.” *PMLA* 64 (1949): 98-114.
- Gaull, Marilyn. *English Romanticism: The Human Context*. New York: Norton, 1988.
- Gérard, Albert S. *English Romantic Poetry: Ethos, Structure, and Symbol in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1968.
- Hassler, Donald M. *Erasmus Darwin*. New York: Twayne, 1973.
- Haworth, “The Titans, Apollo, and the Fortunate Fall in Keats's Poetry.” *SEL* 10 (1970): 637-49.
- Jenyns, Soame. *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*. London, 1759.
- Keats, John. *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*. Ed. Hyder Edward Rollins. Vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1958.

- . *The Poems of John Keats*. Ed. Miriam Allott. London: Longman, 1970.
- King William. *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*. Trans. Edmund Law. Cambridge, 1781.
- King-Hele, Desmond. *Erasmus Darwin: A Life of Unequalled Achievement*. London: Giles de la Mare, 1999.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *Essays in the History of Ideas*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1948.
- . *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1936.
- McKusick, James C. *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Mellor, Anne K. *English Romantic Irony*. 1980. San Jose: toExcel. 1999.
- Milton, John. *The Poems of John Milton*. Ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler. 1960. London: Longman, 1980.
- Sperry, Jr., Stuart M. "Keats, Milton, and *The Fall of Hyperion*." *PMLA* 77 (1962): 77-84.
- Taniuchi, Ritsuko. "Re-reading *Hyperion* with Reference to Moneta's Temple." 143th meeting of the Kansai Coleridge Society, 12 September 2009.
- Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. *In Memoriam*. 2nd ed. Ed. Erik Gray. New York: Norton, 2004.
- Visick, Mary. "'Tease us out of thought': Keats's Epistle to Reynolds and the Odes." *Keats-Shelley Journal* 15 (1966): 87-98.