# Impact Factor: 7.613(SJIF) Research Journal Of English (RJOE)vol-8, Issue-3, 2023

<u>www.rjoe.org.in</u> An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal ISSN: 2456-2696 Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI), Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

# 'Kubla Khan' and 'Fall of Hyperion': A Surrealistic approach to Coleridge and Keats

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Paper Received on 10-08-2023, Accepted on 15-09-2023, Published on 16-09-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.3.224

#### **Abstract**

English Romantic poets of 19th century had a special feature i.e. imagination, which make them unique and versatile. But Blake, Coleridge and Keats have surpassed this type of imagination and redefined it as, "four folded visions", "secondary imagination" and "Negative capability" respectively. English Romanticists have revived the concept of subjectivity. imagination, and believed that a poet is slave of 'I', and Keats is usually tagged with being an objective poet. What Coleridge means by Secondary imagination, is the synonym with what Keats' believes in Negative capability. Subjectivity is the first pillar of flight to new horizons imagination; first stage of connecting oneself with ultimate beauty or to infinite "I". It is the beginning of the poetic journey. It is through poets' self that he is elevated to another stage. Once he understands the secrets of the ultimate creativity, he has to surrender this I, but this I is the vehicle which takes him on his back to Infinite I am or the ultimate beauty. A new world of extra ordinary definitions. A dream world, a world of magic or a world where poet forgets his self and achieves the ultimate union of truth and beauty. Where beauty becomes

paradise, human feelings are subservient to the desired union; where poet forgets his physical being and creates a magical world of beauty and truth.

Surrealism, a movement that began in Paris in the 1920s. It was created in direct response to the horrors of the First World War and to the relatively restrictive conventions of the art world at the time. The point of Surrealism was to bridge the conscious and unconscious mind, to liberate the subconscious, and to get at the heart of what art could truly be when it was not constrained by convention. artist relies on visions and dreams. Through his sub conscious he reaches to a world of visions and imagination. The paper aims to prove that Coleridge and Keats have a different way of looking towards imagination they connect this kind of imagination with Surrealism of late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both poets (Coleridge& Keats) and Surrealist take a special flight through their imagination and dreams and achieve goals of art and beauty.

**Keywords**: Surrealism, Imagination, Subconscious, Subjectivity, Objectivity, Magic.etc.

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Immanuel Kant, the most influential philosopher of Romanticism, reconciles two tendencies of 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy; Objectivism and Subjectivism. which he terms a kind of paradox: on the one hand, the intellectual, rational and, on the other, the spatiotemporal world. A world of senses and reality and the world of mysteries or intuitions. According the Kant, the mind has no content until it interacts with the world; however, the mind does have innate formal structures or templates that order the world that is perceived as a state of the subject. Having established the role of understanding in human knowledge, Kant argues "there exist two faculties that lead understanding - intuitions and concepts 65)". Intuitions (1929,representations in an individual's mind left by sense perceptions. Intuitions come in two forms, they are either pure (a priori) or empirical. Empirical intuitions coincide with the human senses and are colour, sound, taste, smell. and feel. intuitions are time and space and are a priori in that they are logically independent of experience, but are informative in that they give us knowledge of our environment.

The mind also has the power to synthesize its perceptions through the capacity of Imagination. Imagination which according to William Blake is the ultimate pure faculty and connets us to God. It is through the Imagination that we are able to see what is common in external objects. Finally, the mind includes a yet

which Kant calls higher capacity, 'Understanding'. This Understanding. which is intimately connected with our power of judgment, seeks to draw conclusions about what lies beyond the boundaries of sensibility (beyond, for example, time and space). We may not be to know God. Freedom. Immortality directly but we can recognize (through the power of the Understanding) that these things are necessary preconditions for the employment of reason in the realm where we can have knowledge (the world of appearances). Therefore. Kant believes that understanding is the faculty in man which makes him crown of creation.

English Romantics were held between these concretions: Imagination and understanding. William Blake the first Romantic poet of 19h century English Romanticism in Songs of Innocence, sings of the ecstatic joys of childhood and how a child is in complete harmony with God, or his Imagination, free from all discord and irritation. The point here is the ultimate understanding of imagination is not mere imagination, but imagination where one gets closer to ultimate reality and can decode the secrets of universe.

All Romantic poets of 19<sup>th</sup> century had a special feature i.e. imagination, which make them unique and versatile. But Blake, Coleridge and Keats have surpassed this type of imagination and redefined it as, "four folded vision", "secondary imagination" and "Negative capability" respectively.

The paper aims to prove that Coleridge and Keats have a different way

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of looking towards imagination they connect this kind of imagination with Surrealism of late 19th century. The thought is very simple, but twisted. English Romanticists have revived the concept of imagination, and subjectivity. They believed that a poet is slave of 'I', and Keats is usually tagged with being an objective poet. What Coleridge means by Secondary imagination, is the synonym with what Keats' believes in Negative capability. Subjectivity is the first pillar of flight to new horizons imagination; first stage of connecting oneself with ultimate beauty or to infinite "I". It is the beginning of the poetic journey. It is through poets self that he is elevated to another stage. Once he understands the secrets of the ultimate creativity he has to surrender this I, but this I is the vehicle which takes him on his back to Infinite I am or the ultimate beauty. A new world of extra ordinary definitions. A dream world, a world of magic or a world where poet forgets his self and achieves the ultimate union of truth and beauty. Where beauty becomes paradise, human feelings are subservient to the desired union. Where poet forgets his physical being and creates a magical world of beauty and truth.

There were many influential Surrealist writers and artists who were active in the movement from the 1920s to the 1940s. André Breton, an ex-medical and psychiatry student who became interested in pursuing subconscious reality was the founder of Surrealism. "Surrealism was one of the most highly disciplined and tightly organized artistic schools that ever

existed,"(3). Surrealists explained the War by saying "that the Enlightenment's emphasis on rational thinking, while repressing the irrational elements of human nature, made [it] possible" (Rankin 700). Starting in Paris, the movement engaged with "organized leftist politics" for many years (roughly 1924 – 1939), and by the 1930s and 1940s had spread across the globe; "surrealist groups emerged in other cities threatened by fascism—particularly Prague, Bucharest, Tokyo, and London". As Rosemont writes that:

Surrealism aims to reduce, and ultimately to resolve, .....

to free the imagination from the mechanisms of psychic and social repressions (1).

Gershman writes, presumably paraphrasing the First Manifesto of Surrealism:

Surrealism's goal, to paraphrase Breton, is to let the Unconscious express itself, free as far as possible of the normalizing restraints of the Censor. Techniques historically aimed at accomplishing the surrealist purpose "drugs, include dreams, mediums, imitation of the writings of psychotics, inspiration, love, group collaboration in some verbal or pictorial game. (36).

Surrealists believe that t sub-conscious is usually ignored by many artists and the reality is graphed well in art and literature. After Bergson's theory of time as subjective entity, surrealists started dedicating their art to this subjective time, where sub conscious

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mapping is done. They believe that Realism is an objective use of art, while art is always subjective. Sub-conscious mind is expressed and painted in art. That is what Surrealism means.. There is a different kind of narrative that grew out of Surrealist soil. That is sufficiently distinct in its forms; traditional antecedents, that which fuses the "oneiric process" 'the dream life' with everyday urban reality. and sophisticated nonsense reflecting the labyrinthine joy-and terror-of language itself.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge a first generation English Romantic poet, wrote his poem "Kubla Khan" in the autumn of 1797, in a farmhouse near Exmoor.

Similarly, Keats does reveal. throughout his career, a sustained interest in dreams which sets him apart from most other dream writers. His study of dreams and the "kind of imagination that led him into untrodden regions and ultimately forced him to question the value of dreams. The dream like situations first appears in "To Hope"and gradually dreams figure more prominently in Keats's verse,and in the narrative poems "Endymion', 'Isabella', 'The Eve of St. Agnes;, and 'Lamia'. Indeed, in "The Fall of Hyperion", Keats bases the entire poem on one of his own dreams.

After distinguishing between the primary and the secondary imaginations, Coleridge writes, "The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the Infinite I AM.(6)"This creative power is alone able

bridge the gulf between pure intelligence and the sensuous world of objects; it alone can elevate the images of this world and in the same act of will realize the ideas of intelligence. To it belongs the "esemplastic" power making many into one, of reducing multeity to a unity. Out of this integrating activity of the imagination, beauty is created. Coleridge is careful to formulate the principles of the imagination to accord with his metaphysics. In the first place, the imagination is relative to a finite mind, hence it is embodied in the objective world. On the other hand, it is an eternal act of creation in the infinite principle of Self-activity. It has roots in both realms, hence it can be defined in terms of neither alone but partakes of both without being either exclusively. The imagination may create at will since it is identified with an unconditioned self-activity. determine its own activity, but being pure idea, its energy is necessarily limited when it assumes a finite form. When the imagination unites the realm of the finite with infinity in one act, the resulting reconciliation is the Beautiful. distinction from the primary imagination, Coleridge considers the secondary as "an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and the mode of operation. It dissolves, dissipates, in order to recreate—at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify"(7). This distinction between the primary and the secondary imaginations, results from viewing the same activity as

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infinite and pure and as embodying itself in the objective with ease, and as finite productive energy which requires the imagination to disintegrate and to diffuse the particular forms engaging it so that these may be reordered into more meaningful unities.

After reading Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, it is evident that imagination is a two folded process; primary which is the subjective faculty of the poet, and secondary where poet lets loose I to dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate. Secondary imagination is a creative and esemplatic feature of creativity. Poet enters into a different world to unify with ultimate reality.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted

Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover! (12-16)

The source of the sacred river was a deep mysterious gorge that ran down a green hill across a wood of cedar trees. All these make the enclosed area wild, savage and enchanted, yet it is holy, fit to be frequented by a woman wandering about in the light of a waning moon in search of her demon-lover. Amidst the loud, tumultuous noise caused by the fall of water into the sunless sea, Kubla Khan could hear the voices of his ancestors to be prepared for a war in the near future:

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,

	 •••••	•••••	 	
•••••				
•••••	 •••••	•••••	 •••••	

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice.

These lines suggest that the poet has entered the world of imagination. He is opening the doors of imagination. The door which leads him to ultimate and esemplastic capability of Imagination has been open now. Before he creates a miracle, he needs to enter into a different world of creativity where he needs to surrender his self to connect with infinite I Am.

A damsel with a dulcimer In a vision once I saw: It was an Abyssinian maid And on her dulcimer she played, Singing of Mount Abora.(

Now the poet is ready to enter into a world of creativity, where the search for true beauty is achieved, but like mystics this union is achieved through a vision or a dream. In Kubla Khan Coleridge starts with a dream, and the finally end up converting the dream into a vision and in the final lines the miracle is seen:

Could I revive within me	
Her symphony and song,	

And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Once, in a vision, he saw and heard an Abyssinian maid playing on her dulcimer and singing a sad song of the wild splendour of Mount Abora. The poet then enters into a phase of ascension and tries to recreate in his imagination the

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sweet, enchanting music of the maid, he would feel so inspired and ecstatic that with the music of his poetry he could build Kubla Khan"s pleasure-dome in the air / imagination. In other words, a poet in a spell of poetic inspiration is capable of creation like God. Coleridge draws a picture of a poet inspired. In that moment he transcends into a superhuman being. Thus, a poem of dream and vision. Through sub conscious and creativity, the poet loses his self and reaches a stage where self becomes selfless and imagination becomes everything. Coleridge, in these lines defines secondary imagination as a power of a poet, when he loses his self and connects himself with Infinite 'I AM'. this is possible only through dream and vision, which is a main characteristic of Surrealism.

Coleridge depicted nature something holy and supernatural as well. Two very important episodes are the course of the "sacred" river and the demonic love. The river is depicted at first as something peaceful and pleasurable, but after leaving the gardens of the pleasuredome, it becomes violent and wild. Therefore, the river's journey begins with rationality, the reasonable parts of the mind that people can control, but as it leaves the gardens and takes its journey to a "savage place", where it reaches "the caverns measureless to man", and sinks "in tumult to a lifeless ocean", it becomes wild, violent, dynamic and uncontrollable - which might represent the unconscious. As summarized bv Harry Blamires, Carlyle's ideas express the fact

that it is not the conscious mind, "the mind as

acquainted with its strength" that is the spring of health and vitality, for its concern is with the mechanical and the overt. The unconscious is the source of dynamism, for it is in touch with the region of meditation, those mysterious depths that lie below the level of conscious argument and discourse. (67)

Therefore, the river's course might serve as a map of the human mind and its creative powers that lie in the unconscious, where undesired, mysterious and hidden ideas come to surface. The river's journey cause of being so violent, wild and uncontrollable may be due to the fact that it reflects the violent resistance evoked by these types of thoughts, which attempts to prevent them from coming to the surface. Thus, in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, André Breton, the acclaimed founder of the movement, defines Surrealism as,

Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express–verbally, by means of written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern. (26).

Romantic writers, with their interest in the powers of the mind, naturally continued the study of dreams, with investigations of conscious and unconscious states and the shadowy realms in between. Coleridge claims that during his profound sleep his external senses were not functioning and, further, that "all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent

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expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort"(p. 296). Upon being interrupted, Coleridge found that except "for eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest" had vanished and, recalling a metaphor which we have already noted, he compares the fading of his dream to "the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast. Keats, in his last dream poem, The Fall of Hyperion, paradoxically explains how a dream can teach us not to be dreamers. In The Fall, Keats examines the relationship between sleep and poetry and thus, coming full circle, ends his career on the same theme with which it began. In The Fall of Hyperion, however, Keats follows the older tradition of the medieval dream vision, as was Coleridge does in "Kubla Khan" that the dream-vision was a suitable form for describing the creative process. The Fall of Hyperion is in large part the story of a dreamer's philosophical poetic progressionn. Keats' philosophy is to make his readers believe that reality is a compulsion, and one can surrender ones self and reach a stage in his subconscious achieve poetic excellence. His philosophy is presumably a progression toward true poet- hood, does not include

lessons in the most obvious requirement

for achieving that exalted state; namely,

writing poetry. The only reference to the

actual task of writing comes in the

induction which, being retrospective, is

actually last in the sequence of events

narrated in the poem. The dreamer's

experiences in the dream itself are geared

toward the development of personal

characteristics, of a greater understanding

of what his ultimate goal should be in writing verse, and of what kind of imaginative stance he must take in order to The attain that goal. eighteen-line induction makes clear that simply writing down a dream in metered speech does not a poet make, since the narrator writes that 'Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse / Be poets of fanatic's will be known / When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave' (.16-18). And though the induction is very much concerned with the task of writing, once we enter the kaleidoscopic series of dream frames, the work is much more concerned with what kind of imaginative approach to humanity makes a versifier capable of writing true poetry.

The iimagination, according to Keats, is unconscious and animal-like in its instinctiveness; it conceives rather than perceives; and, in Keats's words, "it has a purpose and. its eyes are bright with it"(12). It is to be trusted above all else because it is instinctive and thus seizes upon truth. The "Negative Capability" letter was written when Keats was speculated to be producing some of the highest function of his poetry, "Several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—

I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being

.....

further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other

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consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.(29)

unfinished drafts Both of "Hyperion" and "The Fall of Hyperion" seek and question identity. Keats was getting at a deeper issue of imagination's veracity through the theory of constant nourishment of one generation to the next by using the Titans as symbols of imagination and beauty. Their fall "Deep in the shady sadness of a vale... sat greyhair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone," questions the authenticity of the imagination. The imagination, like such divine beings, might be authentic but there is no guarantee of its transcendence through time. Oceanus's speech and Apollo's ascension both point to Hyperion's concern with truth and its relationship with beauty, knowledge, and suffering. Truth is closely associated with knowledge and both are acquired through pain, which results from the understanding acceptance of change impermanence. However painful, truth is pure and beautiful, and what is beautiful is eternal. It is this honorable truth that the human spirit strives to attain. That is why Keats calls Hyperion, "the agonies, the strife of human hearts." Similarly, the idea of progress run throughout the poem. The old gods with old, worn-out ideas are replaced by the new gods who possess superior modern knowledge. Eventually, even the vanquished old gods come to accept the new gods as the rightful leaders and accept their ways as right and just. These ideas are a reflection of Keats's progression as a poet.

'The Fall of Hyperion" suggests that suffering is indiscriminate when Apollo declares, "Knowledge enormous makes a God of me," (3.113). Apollo triumphs because of his understanding of human suffering. His knowledge and full understanding of the human experience allows him to gain the power of truth, which in turn allows him to be "a God" without physical force. However, because Apollo is not a human himself, he must use his imagination to conjure his interpretation of human suffering. This is the 'High Imagination ' or the secondary imagination (what Coleridge believes)or what Keats himself believes "Negative Capability". It is a pre-figurative and creative use of dreams as a communicative model. This conscious imagination really means a relation between the imagination as the one and a finite. Keats brings a sense of identity that includes an intense awareness of the mutable nature of man, yet at the same time a predisposition to the wishful notions that change is growth and that a poet's quest is heroic. Keats's mythmaking take two forms: historicized beauty and turning old myths into new symbolic signifiers. Keats thinks of mythology as ancient poetry, so he expects the myths to act as emblems of human passion. He shapes the classical mythology the contraries around of iov melancholy making mythology itself is a symbol.

Keats describes his creativity, noself or self-less.. In a letter to Richard Woodhouse (10/27/1818) he writes:

As to the Poetic Character itself... it is not itself – it has no self – it is everything and nothing...

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begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated.(7)

This thoughtless chamber is negative capability. Keats believes that through self a poet enters into a world where he surrenders his self and achieves ascension. Keats himself frames guidelines to some the interpretation of dreams which he "The provides in Fall of Hyperion":

Thou art a dreaming thing; A fever of thyself

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Only the dreamer venoms all his days
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve
The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposites, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world
The other vexes it.

(1,168-69,175-76,199-202)

The poem begins with lyrical argument to introduce the work. In it, the narrator introduces the idea that the poem could be either a dream or a vision, which Keats like Coleridge believes is the outcome of ultimate imagination. The last three lines of the first stanza—"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"—suggests the relationship between poetic vision (or dream) and death. We will only know whether or not the poem, 'The Fall of Hyperion, is the work of a religious fanatic or a poet when the "warm scribe my hand is in the grave," or when the creator is dead. The poet's vision of Hyperion's fall, then, is can be read as psychological, or the poet's inner conflict on the nature of art. Moneta, the goddess of memory and mother of the muses, challenges the speaker's conception of the role of the poet. In order to enter the temple, the speaker must defend poetry, or at least justify the poet's influence on the world:

What benefit canst though do, or all thy tribe, to the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing. A fever of thyself. (

In "The Fall of Hyperion" he discusses at great length the relationship between dreams and poetry. Keats follows the older tradition of the medieval dream vision, aware as was Coleridge in "Kubla Khan" that the dream-vision was a suitable form for describing the creative process. The Fall is also a personal allegory. Keats's dream which is both an oraculum and a somnium -- one that veils its true meaning -- functions on two levels. On the surface, it is a re-enactment of the evolution of the gods, and on a deeper level, it is an allegory of the various stages of Keats's own philosophical thought and the poetry which emerged from each stage. It is in 'The Fall' that Keats describes a healthy creativity which stems from a healthier dream -- one which paradoxically illustrates the dangers of dreaming. In a discussion with Moneta reminiscent of the Peona-Endymion debate on dreams, Keats, engaging in an interior dialogue with himself, finally faces the question of whether dreaming can be a healthy form of creativity. The dreamer first learns that only "those to whom the miseries of the

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world/Are misery, and will not let them rest" (I,148-49) can mount the steps. But after hearing this he is puzzled and asks: 'Are there not thousands in the world

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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 Other men here: but I am here alone.' (I,154-60) Moneta explains: 'They whom thou spak'st of are no vision'ries.

..., They are no dreamers weak,
They seek no wonder but the human face,
No music but a happy-noted voice
They come not here,
they have no thought to come.' (I,161-65)
Before the speaker can become a poet,
however, he must first learn what it means
to be a dreamer. This Moneta explains:
'What benefit canst thou do, or all thy
tribe.

To the great world?

.....

Whether his labours be sublime or low.' (1,167-73)

Thus, as a member of the dreaming tribe, the speaker not only fails to "benefit" others, but is, in fact, harming himself. He exists in a state of fever unable to experience what joys may be possible for him because he is constantly dreaming of better worlds. Dreams that promise "blisses pure and deep" are in actuality harmful because they destroy by force of contrast the dreamer's waking reality. The dream in "The Fall of Hyperion" is a powerful literary device that allows Keats

to explore complex themes and emotions in a unique and imaginative way. By delving into the realms of the subconscious, Keats is able to create a rich and layered work that holds deep significance for both himself and his readers. The dream also allowed Keats to explore his own spiritual beliefs and connect with the divine.

Surrealism in the larger, sense may be called idealistic, for it claims that there is a higher reality behind the seen world. Since each artist's conception of this higher reality is different, there is much room for mystery in surrealistic works of art.The surrealistic artist is free to create a miracle One interpretation of this development of surrealism is that the role of the writer has gradually become identified with the role of the priest or miracle worker. The poet especially has become a man endowed with supernatural vision, the effect of which, in his work, evokes witchcraft or a supernatural world. The poet then is the priest who causes the miracle by a magical use of words, by an incantation which he himself does not fully understand. And the work thus brought into being is a mystery which can be felt and experienced without necessarily comprehendnded. being Thus both Coleridge in 'Kubla Khan' and Keats in ' Fall of Hyperion' use this magic through their dreams to achieve this mystery, which is the highest form of creativity.

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#### How to cite this article?

**Prof. Dr. Gazala Gaiys** "Kubla Khan' and 'Fall of Hyperion': A Surrealistic approach to Coleridge and Keats" Research Journal Of English (RJOE)8(3), PP:214-224,2023, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.3.224