

"His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels"  
--Hyperion --John Keats

HYPERION NOW

Your rising is the same, assertive, vast,  
With radiating hues eye-aching bright  
To prod awake your realm, demanding homage.  
Keats said you even roared like earthly fire--  
Perhaps at impositions you foresaw.  
The pantheon was subject to rebellion:  
Uprisings from within, downfalling thrones,  
Emblazoned scepters changing hands again.

But much depended on the latitude  
Of viewers. Man's perceptions of the gods,  
Their machinations, jealousies and loves,  
Had ethnic stems, climatic veins. Some came  
From rotting grapes, and some were dream derived,  
Accompanied by lyres and satin whispers  
Of Erato. Her worldly devotees  
Were always ripe with lavish fruitful words.  
A searing summer could induce new tales  
Of usurpation: Helicon besieged,  
A flood, a lava tide, gyrating weather  
Could unseat Apollo, could restore  
Your name. Or wizened Saturn hung in space.

And twice in ancient Egypt, Amon Ra  
Fell from his chariot to raft the rivers  
Underground and cast dice with Osiris.  
His face denied to loyal worshippers  
For months, they lost their crops, their faith;  
their glyphs  
Recorded times of famine and of fear.  
Astrologers reported war in heaven.

(cont.)