



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The 'Aching Pleasure' of John Keats's Poetry 1818-1820

Ellen Nicholls

Registration Number: 150227988

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Arts & Humanities
School of English

February 2019

Abstract

This thesis investigates how John Keats explores the diverse and continually shifting relationships between pleasure and pain. It considers how far Keats engages with, advances, and departs from a medical understanding of affective experience by thinking about how poetry becomes the means by which Keats tests, explores, and experiments with the idea that pleasure and pain are intrinsically linked. This study hones in on Keats's most productive years of poetic composition, between 1818 and 1820, as a period in which Keats intensely experimented with poetic form and genre even as he experienced a painful decline in health. Through a new formalist and reader response approach, this thesis shows how the nuances of poetic language and the subtle manipulations of poetic form are the spaces through which Keats navigates the dynamic nature of 'aching Pleasure' ('Ode on Melancholy', 23).

The opening chapter focusses on weeping in *Isabella*, analysing the liminal status of tears as psycho-physiological manifestations that encompass both the pleasures and pains of the mind and body. The second chapter continues to look at selfhood and grief in *Hyperion. A Fragment*, focussing on the figure of Saturn to discuss how Keats tests the notion that identity can be shaped and perfected by pain and loss. Chapter three moves away from individual suffering to investigate how *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes* situate the reader on the outside of spectacles of pleasure and pain, highlighting the unsettling pleasure experienced during the act of observing another's encounter with anguish or delight. In chapter four, the uncertain and 'bitter-sweet' (*Lamia*, I, 59) 'truth' status of pleasure is explored in *Lamia*; a poem that teasingly provokes analytical choice-making at the same time as it refuses to take sides. The final chapter looks at Keats's 1819 spring odes to show how numbness is not an experience that is analogous to the annihilation of all feeling, but a sensation that incorporates the elusive tinglings of pleasurable pain.

Keats's poetry never defines a single theory of how pain and pleasure intermingle. Instead, it relishes in exploring painful pleasure as an uncertain affective state, demonstrating the inexhaustible diversity of human experience. This thesis shows how Keats's profoundest insights and most intellectually challenging lines of poetry occur at those moments when the young poet attempts to 'unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain' (*Lamia*, I, 192).

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my primary supervisor, Dr Madeleine Callaghan, for her invaluable guidance and substantial support throughout my thesis.

Thanks also go to my second supervisor Dr Katherine Ebury for her thought-provoking responses to this project and for her advice on how to approach a medical reading of Keats's works. I consider myself especially privileged to have received the generous and insightful feedback of Professor Michael O'Neill for my second chapter on *Hyperion*.

I am also very grateful to my girlfriend, Daisy Ferris, for her careful proofreading and her unwavering support and understanding.

This project was funded by the Wolfson Foundation.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction: ‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’	5-28
Chapter One: ‘She Weeps alone for Pleasures not to be’: The Science and Romance of Tears in <i>Isabella; Or, the Pot of Basil</i>	29-64
Chapter Two: ‘[H]orrors, Portion’d to a Giant Nerve’: The Pain of Saturn’s ‘Soul-Making’ in <i>Hyperion: A Fragment</i>	65-101
Chapter Three: ‘Ach[ing] to See’: Spectacles of Pain and Pleasure in <i>The Fall of Hyperion</i> and <i>The Eve of St Agnes</i>	102-137
Chapter Four: Confusing ‘Intrigue with the Specious Chaos’: The Impurity of Pleasure in <i>Lamia</i>	138-176
Chapter Five: ‘Pain had no Sting, and Pleasure’s Wreath no Flower’: Numbness as Painful Pleasure in Keats’s Spring Odes	177-215
Conclusion: Keats’s ‘Voyage of Conception’	216-222
Bibliography	223-241

Introduction: ‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’

Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow,
 Lethe’s weed and Hermes’ feather;
 Come today, and come tomorrow,
 I do love you both together!
 I love to mark sad faces in fair weather,
 And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder.
 Fair and foul I love together
 (‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’, 1-7).¹

The interdependency of pleasure and pain is a central preoccupation in the poetry of John Keats. Keats explored the animating and changing relationships between these ostensible contraries, welcoming joy and sorrow as equally desirable sensations and as feelings that repeatedly come ‘both together’. Keats shared in the conviction of his poetic contemporaries that ‘Joy & Woe are woven fine’ and that ‘Under every grief & pine / Runs a joy with silken twine’.² But unlike Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron, Keats’s belief in the ‘sweetness of the pain!’ (‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’, 23) was informed and enriched by first-hand encounters with dissecting, medicating, and surgically operating upon the diseased and ailing body in an often extreme state of suffering. Keats’s apprenticeship as an apothecary; his medical training and duties as a surgeon’s dresser at the united hospitals of St. Thomas and Guy’s; and his painful and suffocating experiences nursing his mother Frances and brother Tom through terminal pulmonary tuberculosis, were defining encounters with pain that appear to be far removed from any trace of delight. And yet the young poet believed that misfortune offered man ‘the pleasure of trying the resources of his spirit’ (*John Keats: Letters I*, 186),³ ardently pursuing the idea that ‘branchèd thoughts’ are ‘new grown with pleasant pain’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 52) so that suffering is counterpointed by the pleasure of personal, intellectual, and imaginative growth. Keats embraced medicine as a branch of knowledge that was compatible with his poetic ambitions. While he resisted the taxonomic and axiomatic logic of those

¹ John Keats, *John Keats The Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard, 3rd edition (London: Penguin Group, 1988). All poems will be cited from this edition and are cited parenthetically hereafter.

² William Blake, ‘Auguries of Innocence’, 59 and 61-62, in *William Blake: The Complete Poems*, ed. by Alicia Ostriker, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1977).

³ John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1818*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958). All citations are indicated parenthetically hereafter.

disciplines that classified existence into certain and distinct states of being, Keats gained from medicine a relish for exploring, speculating upon, and thinking deeply about the life of sensations, even as he acknowledged the inherent unknowability of embodiment and of man's internal existence. Critics repeatedly recognise that pleasure and pain are inextricably bound in Keats's imagination, but none have yet teased out in a full-length study the ways in which Keats characterises and explores their relation. This thesis redresses this gap, arguing that Keats utilises his poetry as a site of experimentation in which he tests how far it is possible to 'unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain' (*Lamia*, I, 192) and thereby show how tightly the gordian knot of 'aching Pleasure' ('Ode on Melancholy', 23) is wound.

'Gross Slang of Voluptuousness'

During his lifetime, Keats was characterised as a poet of pleasure who unthinkingly and irresponsibly indulged in imagining and articulating experiences of sensuous delight. Contemporaneous responses to the publication of *Poems* in 1817 and *Endymion* in 1818 attacked Keats's poetry for its 'gross slang of voluptuousness',⁴ associating the 'uncouth language' of Keatsian pleasure with Leigh Hunt's bourgeois,⁵ liberal politics and the cockney school of 'loose, nerveless versification'.⁶ In particular, *Endymion*'s sexualised imagery and crude language were obscenely direct: Keats did not shy away from describing the young hero's arousal at the 'slippery blisses' (*Endymion*, II, 758) of the moon goddess's lips or from depicting the Latmian shepherd swooning after he has 'Drunken from Pleasure's nipple' (*Endymion*, II, 869). John Gibson Lockhart's anonymous review of *Endymion* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* famously derided such sensory luxuriousness, labelling Keats as a 'fanciful dreaming tea-drinker [...] without logic enough to analyse a single idea'.⁷ Lockhart's review echoed Byron's more cutting remark that Keats is 'always frigging his imagination' and creating poetry of 'mental masturbation'.⁸ Like Lockhart, Byron considered Keats to be an immature poet who solipsistically and mindlessly indulged in the private pleasures of the imagination without thinking through how poetry might help both the reader and poet to gain

⁴ *Endymion* was anonymously attacked for its 'gross slang of voluptuousness' in a June 1818 review in the *British Critic*, which can be found in *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by G. M. Matthews (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1971), pp. 91-96 (p. 94).

⁵ John Wilson Crocker criticised Keats's 'uncouth language' in the *Quarterly Review* in April 1818, which can be found in *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 110-114 (p. 111).

⁶ The critique of *Endymion*'s loose versification comes from Lockhart's August 1818 review in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, which can be found in *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 97-110 (p. 104).

⁷ *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, p. 101.

⁸ Lord George Gordon Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (London: Murray, 1973-1996), p. 225.

a richer understanding of the world and of the human condition. But whereas Keats's earlier poems, such as *Endymion*, 'Imitation of Spenser', and 'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill' continued to be read as thoughtless indulgences in Spenserian bowers of poetic luxury and sensory delight, his later 1819 works, including the *Hyperion* poems and the spring odes, were considered as turning towards a more serious apprehension of life's 'Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 281). In the preface to *Adonais*, for example, Shelley acknowledges his prior 'repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of [Keats's] earlier compositions were modelled', before exalting 'the fragment of *Hyperion*, as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years'.⁹ Such dichotomising between Keats's early indulgence in poetic luxury and later contemplation of human suffering follows the assertion in 'Sleep and Poetry' that the developing mind of the poet must bid farewell to joys and 'pass them for a nobler life, / Where [he] may find the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts' ('Sleep and Poetry', 123-125). And yet it was this movement between affective experiences, the points at which joy passes into sorrow, that Keats was fascinated with throughout his career, from the 'pleasing woe' ('To Lord Byron', 14) of his early 1814 sonnet 'To Lord Byron' to the 'aching Pleasure' ('Ode to Melancholy', 23) of his mature and celebrated odes. Keats's poetry is deeply invested in liminal states of being, repeatedly exploring those moments when pain is welcomed and figured as arriving at the same time as pleasure is departing and 'bidding adieu' ('Ode to Melancholy', 23). This thesis seeks to tease out how Keats's poetry explores such uncertain affective states, looking at how both joy and agony were part of 'a nobler life' ('Sleep and Poetry', 123) in Keats's imagination.

Christopher Ricks's study of *Keats and Embarrassment* is a significant influence on this thesis' approach to pleasure and pain. Taking up F. R. Leavis' call for a revaluation of the relationship between Keats's 'sensuousness and his seriousness',¹⁰ Ricks argues that luxurious sensuality and the embodied experience of embarrassment are of high moral and intellectual importance for Keats. Embarrassment in Keats's poetry is an experience that, for Ricks, incorporates a complex and often paradoxical mix of feelings, encompassing uneasiness and discomfort around bodily pleasure as well as implicating the reader in the 'hot tinglings of [embarrassed]

⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Adonais An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of "Endymion", "Hyperion" etc.' in *Percy Bysshe Shelley The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 529-545 (p. 529).

¹⁰ F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), p. 272.

sensation'.¹¹ Ricks argues that it is 'the contrariety of pleasure which most moves [Keats's] imagination',¹² focussing particular attention on *Endymion* and Keats's early reception. This thesis agrees with Ricks in reading Keatsian pleasure as an unstable and impure bodily and psychological experience, but it extends its investigation beyond the parameters of *Keats and Embarrassment* to show how Keats's imagination is also alive to the contrariety of pain. Rather than centring discussion solely on embarrassment as one of the important relationships between joy and sorrow that intrigued Keats, this thesis looks at multiple connections between pleasure and pain, refocussing attention on how Keats's thinking surrounding painful pleasure and pleasurable pain matured in his last publication: *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820). Keats does not always make the reader recoil from intense bodily pleasure or blush with the embarrassment of grief. He also asks the reader to contemplate and even relish scenes of suffering and delight.

Pleasure Thermometer

This thesis reads pleasure and pain in Keats's works as resisting certain demarcation; an idea that Keats began to explore in *Endymion* through the unlikely simile of a 'Pleasure Thermometer' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 218). In his 30th January 1818 letter to John Taylor, Keats asked his publishers to insert what now makes up lines 777-781 of the first book of *Endymion*, explaining how they form a wider 'Argument' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 218) for the poem. Keats writes how these lines,

set before me at once the gradations of Happiness even like a kind of Pleasure Thermometer — and is my first Steps towards the chief Attempt in the Drama — the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow (*Letters: John Keats I*, 218-219).

As a scientific tool used for quantifying exact measurements of temperature or 'intensities' of heat, the thermometer is an instrument that seems to oppose the idea that Keats's poetic treatment of pleasure and pain refuses the definite categorisations of taxonomic logic.¹³ As such, Keats's letter to Taylor and its corresponding poetic passage have repeatedly been read

¹¹ Christopher Ricks, 'Keats, Byron, and "Slippery Blissess"' in *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 69-114 (p. 83).

¹² Ricks, 'Sensuousness and Seriousness' in *Keats and Embarrassment*, pp. 143-156 (p. 145).

¹³ For a full investigation of how Keats draws upon scientific words such as 'thermometer', 'essence', and 'intensities' in his articulation of the creative process, see Stuart M. Sperry, 'The Chemistry of Poetic Process' in *Keats the Poet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 30-71.

as tracing ‘gradations of Happiness’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 218) through an ascending scale that leads ‘by degrees, / To the chief intensity’ (*Endymion*, I, 800) of unadulterated bliss. Keats appears to step beyond the excessive and crude sensuality of eroticism in order to reflect seriously and eloquently upon the nature of pleasure and human happiness:

Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
 Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
 A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
 Full alchemized, and free of space [...]
 [...] But there are
 Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
 To the chief intensity (*Endymion*, I, 777-800).

Pleasure is not embarrassing here; rather, it is a serious object of philosophical and aesthetic contemplation. As such, in the first half of the twentieth century, critics read these lines of the poem as articulating a neo-platonic progression from:¹⁴ the earthly pleasures of ‘a rose leaf’ and ‘music’s kiss’ (*Endymion*, I, 782 and 784); through the ‘sympathetic touch’ (*Endymion*, I, 785) that binds men together; and towards an empathic, divine ‘fellowship’ (*Endymion*, I, 778) with transcendental beauty, as the young hero unites with the goddess Cynthia before ‘vanish[ing] far away’ (*Endymion*, IV, 1002) into a realm ‘free of space’ (*Endymion*, I, 780). More recently, Ayumi Mizukoshi and Susan Wolfson have shown how rather than transcending bodily sensuality, the pleasure thermometer ‘climaxes with a voluptuous paean to erotic love as the principle of life’.¹⁵ Mizukoshi reads ‘fellowship with essence’ (*Endymion*, I, 779) as a “‘a sort of oneness” (I, 796) with essence [that] denotes the state of sensuous immersion in things of beauty’.¹⁶ Moving through the pleasure thermometer’s gradations of sensory indulgence and sympathetic fellowship, man steps towards the chief happiness which is to be found in an ideal empathetic entanglement with another subject or aesthetic object: by experiencing the ‘vicarious pleasures of the senses [...] the more the boundaries of one’s ego

¹⁴ See for example Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics, And After-Fame* (London, 1920), pp. 171-205.

¹⁵ Susan Wolfson, ‘Falling in and out of love with Endymion: A Poetic Romance Rereading King Lear’ in *Reading John Keats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 33-49 (p. 41).

¹⁶ Ayumi Mizukoshi, “‘Wherein Lies Happiness?’: *Endymion* (1818)’ in *Keats, Hunt and the Aesthetics of Pleasure* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 131-147 (p. 141).

dissolve, the more one's sensations are intensified'.¹⁷ Keats's long and 'wandering' poetic romance is undoubtedly invested in experiences of intense happiness and the life of pleasurable sensation,¹⁸ as early reviewers were quick to notice and attack. Yet, if *Endymion* is an allegory that traces the hero's ascension through the varying 'gradations of happiness' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 218) and towards an ideal perception of and union with unpolluted pleasure and beauty, then the poem remains alive to the 'painful toil' (*Endymion*, III, 522) involved in the hero's quest towards such 'fellowship divine' (*Endymion*, I, 778). Alongside erotic sensuality, the poem also depicts some of the most startling scenes of intense psychological anguish and bodily pain that Keats ever wrote, imaging tortured forms in 'an agony of sound' (*Endymion*, III, 485) and the 'brain-sick shepherd prince' (*Endymion*, II, 43) in fits of melancholy madness and despondency. As Keats's letter insists, the pleasure thermometer involves 'the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 219) so that as a laboratory tool essential for hypothetical enquiry, the thermometer becomes an image that embodies Keats's experimental attitude towards pleasure as an experience that intersects with pain; a guiding metaphor that encompasses *Endymion*'s wider poet aim: to 'test and trial [Keats's] Powers of Imagination' (*John Keats: Letters* I, 169).

It is in book III that Keats shows how an ostensible 'fellowship' can become a deceptive pleasure that descends into a 'torture-pilgrimage' (*Endymion*, III, 524). Tempting Glaucus away from the genuine 'love and friendship' (*Endymion*, I, 801) of Scylla, Circe offers 'more bliss than all / The range of flowered Elysium' (*Endymion*, III, 427-428), creating an alluring bower of luxury that vanishes 'with a nod' (*Endymion*, III, 533) of the witch's head. Far from representing the 'chief intensity' of a 'fellowship divine' (*Endymion*, I, 800 and 778), Circe becomes 'chief / Of pains resistless' (*Endymion*, III, 539-540), transforming past lovers into beasts before torturing them in a grotesque ritual:

She whisked against their eyes the sooty oil.

Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,

Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,

¹⁷ Mizukoshi, "Wherein lies Happiness?", p. 142.

¹⁸ In a letter to Benjamin Bailey on 8th October 1817, Keats quotes from a letter he sent to his brother George in which he responds to Hunt's question 'why endeavour after a long Poem?'. Keats answers Hunt's concerns about the length of *Endymion*, writing: 'Do not the Lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading?' (*John Keats: Letters* I, 170).

Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage;
 Until their grievèd bodies 'gan to bloat
 And puff from the tails end to the stiflèd throat
 (*Endymion*, III, 521-526).

Keats's depiction of tormented forms in gradually intensifying states of agony conveys a visceral horror that is equal to the 'Heaving [...] pain' (*Hyperion*, II, 27) of *Hyperion*'s mourning Titans. Circe remorselessly 'laugh[s] out' loud as she inflicts an humiliating transformation upon the helpless and 'grievèd bodies' (*Endymion*, III, 509 and 525) of those whom she charmed with pleasure, as if she is participating in a perverse game for her own amusement. Endymion's encounter with Glaucus's narrative is a crucial but painful step on his journey through the gradations of happiness; an experience that reveals the necessity of exercising caution over those pleasures that might cheat the fancy. Keats demonstrates how that which causes the body pleasure is often a source of temptation and suspicion, beginning to explore ideas surrounding the truth status of bodily pleasure that he comes to flesh out fully in poems such as *Lamia* and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. *Endymion* reveals how 'that which beck[s] us towards a 'Melting' (*Endymion*, I, 777 and 810) between forms is not always unproblematically pleasurable. The young shepherd's 'steppings' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 218) toward a 'Mingled' (*Endymion*, I, 811) union with the moon goddess repeatedly involve 'richer entanglements' (*Endymion*, I, 798) between suffering and delight. Rather than straightforwardly measuring and organising affective experiences into the closed boxes of a hedonistic scale, Keats subverts and critiques such a reductive understanding of experience by showing how suffering and sorrow can be perceived at the most intense points of pleasure. The 'pleasure thermometer' becomes an unstable and shifting scale whose gradations are paradoxically dependent upon 'the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 219). This thesis agrees with and extends Stuart M. Sperry's observation that *Endymion* was an experiment and an allegory that was not 'clearly fixed in [Keats's] mind before he began but something that matured and developed as he progressed — that worked itself out within the poem'.¹⁹ Such a formative encounter with poetic creation as a process of exploration also influenced Keats's subsequent artistic engagements with pleasure and pain, which understood joy and sorrow as experiences that are not fixed, but part of the same fluid continuum.

¹⁹ Stuart M. Sperry, 'The Allegory of Endymion', *Studies in Romanticism*, 2 (1962), pp. 38-53 (p. 43).

Beyond Medicine

This thesis is interested in how Keats's investigation of pleasure and pain engages with and presents a challenge to medical interpretations of human experience. Hermione de Almeida's seminal study on *Romantic Medicine and John Keats* is a vital influence on this thesis' investigation of how Keats's medical education influenced his poetic engagement with pleasure and pain.²⁰ Alongside Alan Richardson's study on *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*,²¹ Donald C. Goellnicht's monograph *The Poet-Physician Keats and Medical Science*,²² and Keats's *Anatomical and Physiological Notebook*,²³ de Almeida's research has been an indispensable guide to understanding the exact nature of Keats's medical education and experiences, as well as the broader context of Romantic medicine at the turn of the nineteenth century. In her study, de Almeida argues for medicine's centrality in comprehending Keats's genius, seeking to address 'the fundamental intellectual issues of Romantic medicine [...] as they find focus and expression in the poetry and aesthetic theory' of his works.²⁴ De Almeida's study gives substantial critical attention to physical and psychological suffering in Keats, dedicating a chapter to 'Reading the Faces of Pain' and an entire section to the treatment of painful diseases. Rather than dividing interpretation into a medical reading of suffering and a literary analysis of pleasure, this thesis departs from de Almeida by showing how medicine influenced Keats's engagement with both pleasure and pain, just as poetry likewise influenced his understanding of suffering and delight. Though de Almeida emphasises how Keats is a figure who reanimates the Romantic link between science and literature, she chooses not to read closely the aesthetic and formal particularities of the poem itself. I view the poetry as centrally important in allowing the reader to tease out how Keats's understanding of bodily sensation and human experience developed in and beyond his medical education. Poetry became the space through which Keats continued to explore questions surrounding the human condition that were initially proposed to him through his encounters with medicine.

This thesis argues against de Almeida's suggestion that Keats's poetry 'eschewed, finally, what could not be proved upon the pulses', disagreeing with her proposition that 'the disciplines of

²⁰ Hermione de Almeida, *Romantic Medicine and John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²¹ Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²² Donald C. Goellnicht, *The Poet-Physician Keats and Medical Science* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984).

²³ John Keats, *Keats's Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, ed. by Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).

²⁴ De Almeida, 'Introduction: Reading Life' in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, pp. 3-13 (p. 4).

medicine had trained him to avoid speculation and theoretical diagnosis'.²⁵ Instead, it agrees with Francis O'Gorman that Keats was 'fascinated by the possibility that poetry might occupy [...] the same cultural space as scientific experiment itself',²⁶ viewing poetry as the site in which Keats trialed his ideas and imaginings. De Almeida's argument draws upon Keats's declaration in his 3rd May 1818 letter to J. H. Reynolds that 'axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses' (*John Keats: Letters*, I, 279). But she does not pay attention to how this important statement is paradoxically, and jestingly, an axiomatic utterance that undermines its own argumentative terms. By articulating a scepticism towards the certainties and limitations of philosophical maxims, Keats encourages the reader of his letter to critique his own aphorism, thereby emphasising the process of 'proving' and testing that which seems most definite. Rather than eschewing uncertainties, Keats's poetry repeatedly tests that which appears to be most certain.

'Speculation' was an important concept in Keats's imagination, an idea informed by his medical education and to which he repeatedly returns in the letters. Like scientific experimentation, speculation is 'a tentative procedure [...] adopted in uncertainty whether it will answer the purpose'.²⁷ Keats similarly adopts an experimental and speculative approach to poetry, relishing in the exploration of uncertainty without searching out the closure of definite answers. For Susan Wolfson, Keatsian speculation is 'a conjectural effort that promotes an extension of thought'; Keats turns 'answers into questions, even while he summons questions to produce answers'.²⁸ An education at the united hospitals would have shown Keats the value of such questioning, as well as the necessity of scientific experimentation and medical exploration in developing an understanding of the natural world and the diseases and pains of the human body. In 1815, for example, Keats purchased a ticket for William Allen's lectures on 'Experimental Philosophy', which covered topics ranging from 'astronomy, gravity, electrical fluid, evaporation, organic forms, the speed of light, the light spectrum and human senses',²⁹ offering an insight into the laboratories of scientists such as Sir

²⁵ De Almeida, 'Reading Life', p. 8.

²⁶ Francis O'Gorman, 'Coleridge, Keats, and the Science of Breathing', *Essays in Criticism*, 61 (2011), pp. 365-381 (pp. 366-367).

²⁷ 'Experimentation, n.2', *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/66530?rskey=u6OZOF&result=1&isAdvanced=false#id>> [accessed 12/01/2019].

²⁸ Susan Wolfson, 'Keats the Letter-Writer: Epistolary Poetics', *Romanticism Past and Present*, 6 (1982), pp. 43-61 (p. 49).

²⁹ Nicholas Roe, 'Guy's Hospital, 1814-1817' in *John Keats* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 53-157 (p. 75).

Humphry Davy and Luigi Galvani who were famous for the excitement and drama of their experiments. De Almeida notes how Keats was exposed to such ‘medical experiments with electricity in the wards of St Thomas’s and Guy’s’.³⁰ Keats’s attendance of medical courses and lectures on anatomy and physiology from the famous and enigmatic surgeon Sir Astley Cooper may have taught him the importance of a practical approach to learning, insisting that ‘knowledge can be gained only by observation and experience’.³¹ But far from discouraging speculation, such ‘hands-on’ learning endorsed the exploration of the human body by means of dissecting and investigating the intimate spaces of the organs, arteries, and nervous system. As Liza Heizleman Perkins points out, in Keats’s lifetime, scientific speculation combined conjecture with the close observation of empirical data.³² Keats was exposed to the gruesome sights, harrowing sounds, and putrid smells of a dissecting room that was filled with students closely observing the human anatomy as they carved into the limbs and bodies of decomposing and maggot infested corpses. Yet it was the ‘mad pursuit’ (‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, 9) of investigation, rather than the certitudes of proof, that Keats relished and harnessed in his poetry so that, as Wordsworth recognises in the 1802 preface to his *Lyrical Ballads*, the roles of the anatomist and the poet are intersecting:

However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist’s knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure, he has no knowledge. What then does that Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure’.³³

For Keats, an exploration of the relationship between pleasure and pain is ironically a painful pleasure that at times involves, as Michael O’Neill writes, ‘the intolerable burden of beholding the suffering [projected] onto [...] imaginative creations’,³⁴ even as it enjoys the ‘wild ecstasy’

³⁰ De Almeida, ‘Reading Life’, p. 10.

³¹ Goellnicht, ‘Biography’ in *The Poet-Physician*, p. 28.

³² Lise Heizleman Perkins, ‘Keats’s Mere Speculations’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 43 (1994), pp. 56-74 (p. 60). Perkins describes how ‘speculation’ also leant its name to many scientific instruments involved in close medical observation: ‘Studying botany at Guy’s Hospital, Keats would have used both the “spectacle-glass” or magnifying glass (OED) and the speculum: the mirror inside a microscope. [...] Specula, of course, are also instruments used to penetrate and inspect the body’ (p. 61).

³³ William Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)’ in *The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 595-615 (p. 605).

³⁴ Michael O’Neill, ‘Writing and History in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion: Keats* (2)’ in *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, pp. 210-234 (p. 233).

(‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, 10) of pursuing an understanding of such hardships. Deeply influenced by the *Lyrical Ballads* ‘experiment’,³⁵ Keats shared in Wordsworth’s fascination with ‘the infinite complexity of pleasure and pain’ and was compelled by the older poet’s investigation of the ‘Burden of the Mystery’ (‘Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey’, 39) in these states of being.³⁶ In ‘Tintern Abbey’, a poem of profound importance for Keats and which he considered to be indicative of Wordsworth’s ‘genius’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 281), the speaker traces man’s development from a wild and youthful creature with ‘animal movements’ to a mature and cerebral being who considers the mind as ‘a mansion for all lovely forms’ (‘Tintern Abbey’, 75 and 141). But whereas Wordsworth’s speaker reflects upon a past that is ‘no more’ and a sense of ‘loss’ that is ‘recompence[d]’ by memory’s revelation of that which has been learned since youth (‘Tintern Abbey’, 85, 88, and 89), Keats’s poetry and letters depart from Wordsworth’s teleological approach to knowledge. For Keats, the ‘dark passages’ between life’s ‘Mansion of Many Apartments’ lead to chambers that contain both the bright and ‘pleasant wonders’ of ‘maiden-thought’, even as they shade into a perception of ‘Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 280-281). For Keats, poetry is always a mode of exploration not a means of ending exploration so that knowledge is something to be experienced rather than extracted from those sensations one is attempting to comprehend.

This thesis understands Keats’s poetic investigation of pleasure and pain to engage with, depart from, and advance beyond a medical understanding of the human condition. The 3rd May 1818 letter to Reynolds highlights the importance of speculative thinking in Keats’s imagination, as well as revealing Keats’s seemingly contradictory attitude to medicine. In this letter, Keats appears to reject the influence of ‘physic’ on his poetry even as he gestures towards a method of understanding that depends upon the synthesising of multiple disciplines, including the medical. Drawing upon Wordsworth’s poetry and his medical books, Keats reveals how medicine and poetry are two methods of understanding that are interconnected and in dialogue:

Were I to study physic or rather Medicine again, — I feel it would not make the least difference in my Poetry; when the Mind is in its infancy a Bias is in reality a Bias, but

³⁵ Willaim Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)’ in *The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) pp. 595-615 (p. 595).

³⁶ Wordsworth, ‘Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey’ in *The Major Works*, pp. 131-135. Hereafter the poem will be referred to as ‘Tintern Abbey’.

when we have acquired more strength, a Bias becomes no Bias. Every department of knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole. I am so convinced of this, that I am glad at not having given away my medical Books, which I shall again look over to keep alive the little I know thitherwards [...] An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people — it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery (*Letters: John Keats I*, 276-277).

Keats alludes to the language of ‘Tintern Abbey’ in this important letter, quoting Wordsworth directly by borrowing the phrase ‘Burden of the Mystery’ (‘Tintern Abbey’, 39). The speaker of ‘Tintern Abbey’ figures his encounter with ‘this unintelligible world’ as a ‘heavy’ and ‘weary weight’ that is physically felt by the body in ‘the motion of our human blood’ (‘Tintern Abbey’, 41, 40, and 45). Keats recasts this image of weightiness to describe the growth and receptivity of the creative mind by means of thinking about his own studies of the human body. The letter proposes that the world is at its most ‘unintelligible’ when the mind contains a ‘bias’ that places undue weight or importance on one method of reading and understanding existence. Keats describes how medicine occupied such a status in his early mental life, providing him with a restricted understanding of the world by overshadowing other ‘department[s] of knowledge’. To view life through the narrow limitations of one critical lens indicates an undeveloped mind that is within its ‘infancy’ for Keats. For the mind of the poet to acquire more ‘strength’ and maturity, Keats suggests that we must resist privileging one discipline over another and consider each field of study as a part of our overall pursuit of understanding. Keats’s paradoxical wish ‘to keep alive’ his medical knowledge through revisiting his textbooks does not necessarily undermine the claim that continuing to study ‘physic’ would fail to sharpen his poetic vision; a movement beyond medicine does not necessarily represent a rejection of medicine. Instead, this passage of the letter shows Keats’s desire to bring medicine into an integrated system in which multiple disciplines come into contact with one another as part of a coherent and ‘great whole’. In her discussion of this passage of the letter, de Almeida argues that: ‘For Keats, the intellectual challenge and the potential for good work were parallel in medicine and poetry. [...] The energies of mind displayed in the best practice of each discipline were [...] fully related’.³⁷ By arguing for ‘parallel’ challenges, de Almeida implies that for Keats, poetry and medicine are two differing approaches to understanding that seek to achieve the same end. But de Almeida does not acknowledge how medicine and poetry

³⁷ De Almeida, ‘The London Medical Circle’ in *Romantic Medicine*, pp. 22-33 (p. 24).

intersect in Keats's thinking, emphasising the relation between 'departments' and not the integration of 'departments'. In indicating that 'an extensive knowledge' is necessary for expanding the mind and deepening thought, Keats does not simply suggest that the poet should obtain a broad range of facts and data from several disciplines. Instead, Keats highlights how different disciplines must work in dialogue with one another in order to advance our overall understanding. For Keats, the mature mind requires an interdisciplinarity in which medicine and poetry function together as a part of the same intellectual engagement.³⁸

Pleasure, Pain, and Politics

This thesis limits its scope to how Keats explores the affective relations between pleasure and pain, following Keats's interest in the experiential nature of man's encounter with the world. It does not enter into substantial discussion on how Keats's investigation of painful pleasure intersects with his political life and ideologies; an area of research that has already garnered significant critical attention from Romantic scholars. In *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation*,³⁹ Rachel Schulkins takes Byron's attack of Keats's onanistic poetry as a point of departure. She argues that Keats's erotic and masturbatory imagery serves a social function, establishing Keats's sexual-political stance against conservative conceptions of the asexual and passionless female. Following Jeffrey N. Cox in *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* and Nicholas Roe in *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent*,⁴⁰ Schulkins suggests that erotic pleasure in Keats is politically and socially destabilising, focussing on female pleasure as a sight of revolt. For Schulkins, Keats presents female desire as a conflict between the private wish to gratify sexual yearnings and the societal pressure to suppress it, a conflict resolved in the female masturbatory imagination: women pursue in private that which is publicly prohibited. Gender politics and female desire are important strands of Keats's interest in pleasure and pain, ideas that are addressed in chapter four's discussion of *Lamia*. But this thesis moves beyond Schulkins' study to acknowledge Keats's frustrated awareness of how each individual has a unique encounter with both pleasure and pain; experiences that

³⁸ Goellnicht argues that Keats may well have acquired this interdisciplinary approach to understanding from Sir Astley Cooper, who suggests that: "while professional knowledge should undoubtedly be the first object of your [the man of medicine's] pursuit, general literature should not be neglected, and is so far from being incompatible with that primary object, that it cannot fail to enlarge your views, and give efficacy to your professional researches... there is hardly one branch of knowledge which does not in some measure throw light and illustration upon another." Goellnicht, 'Anatomy and Physiology' in *The Poet-Physician*, p. 120-159 (p. 159).

³⁹ Rachel Schulkins, *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

⁴⁰ Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

are impenetrable to the outside observer. In Keats's mind, a person's status as male or female is only one factor in considering the sheer diversity and unknowability of a person's experience of extreme affective sensations. Consequently, an important aspect of this thesis' investigation is understanding Keats's keen sensitivity to the poet's sympathetic capacity and his struggle to enter into the experiences of another's encounter with joy and sorrow.

In *Keats, Hunt, and the Aesthetics of Pleasure*,⁴¹ Ayumi Mizukoshi also reads Keats's engagement with pleasure through a socio-political lens, but widens the scope of her discussion to incorporate those aesthetic experiences that are outside of erotic desire. Mizukoshi acknowledges how attacks on cockney vulgarity highlight Hunt and Keats's status within a newly emerging middle class which was invested with economic power and an insatiable desire for pleasure and prestige. Yet Mizukoshi departs from Roe, Cox, and Schulkins's suggestions of political radicalism, arguing that Hunt and Keats were not part of an underground group of undereducated, ale drinking plebeians, who were suppressed and persecuted by the government. Rather, she shows how Hunt and Keats were from a coterie of moderate liberals located in the cultured Hampstead suburbs, who enjoyed the leisured and respectable pursuits of poetry readings, tea-drinking, and convivial conversation. Mizukoshi provides an important contribution to understanding how Keats's association with Leigh Hunt and the cockney school influenced the young poet's engagement with pleasure. Yet this thesis turns to how Keats's poetic engagement with both pleasure and pain developed beyond Hunt, looking at those poems that were written after Keats had shrugged off Hunt's influence, rejected his 'lamentable' 'self-delusions' (*John Keats: Letters I*, 143), and derided his egotistical 'pursuit of Honor' (*John Keats: Letters I*, 143). This study seeks to show how Keats's exploration of pleasure and pain reached maturity in his later poems, gaining an independence of thought and imagination that existed apart from Hunt's politics and aesthetics.

The Romantic link between politics and the body in pain has also been explored extensively in Steven Bruhm's *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain In Romantic Fiction*.⁴² Bruhm looks at literary responses to bodily suffering in the context of a rise in revolutionary political violence in Europe and America. Dismantling the binary between Gothic and Romantic fiction, Bruhm shows how both literary modes were interested in 'the implications of physical pain on the

⁴¹ Ayumi Mizukoshi, *Keats, Hunt, and the Aesthetics of Pleasure* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

⁴² Steven Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain In Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

transcendent consciousness'.⁴³ Bruhm suggests that the ways in which 'the political becomes personal is what is really at stake in Romantic representations of pain',⁴⁴ arguing that Romanticism often seeks 'to reconcile the political and social spectacle of pain with one's own experience or personal crisis'.⁴⁵ Bruhm's observation that in 'watching a pained object' one occupies 'a contradictory space both *within* and *outside* that object' has been a significant influence on chapter 3's investigation of pleasure, pain, and spectatorship.⁴⁶ But Bruhm's study chooses not to look at the poetry and life of Keats, instead centring on bodily pain in Gothic fiction and in the poetry of Byron. This thesis follows Bruhm in showing how physical suffering in Romantic poetry is bound to the formal and generic features of a text, but extends beyond the parameters of *Gothic Bodies* by focussing discussion on how pain is explored in relation to pleasure within Keats's poetry. For Keats, pain also transcends the life of the body to incorporate a complex range of psychological and emotional experiences.

'The Feel of Not to Feel it'

Keats repeatedly explores ways in which the hardships of humanity might be pleurably eased by poetry, exploring how the creative imagination can allow both the poet and reader to 'Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 21) the daily trials of existence. For Keats, the mind contains an ability to abstract one from one's bodily sensations so that pain has 'no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower' ('Ode on Indolence', 18). An important component in how Keats imagines the connection between pleasure and pain is in relation to this felt experience of sensations being removed from corporeal awareness, a topic that is fleshed out fully in the final chapter on Keats's odes. Jeremy Davies' monograph on *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature* is an important influence on this thesis as a study that characterises pain as 'a directing of our attention towards our sense of bodily sensing'.⁴⁷ Like Bruhm, Davies also neglects to address the presence of suffering in Keats's poems. But his suggestion that physical pain compels us 'to notice the body's very capacity for feeling' is an important point of departure for this thesis.⁴⁸ In an attempt to assuage pain, Keats's poems remain alive to how the body can paradoxically experience the 'feel of not to feel' ('In Drear-Nighted December',

⁴³ Bruhm, 'Introduction' in *Gothic Bodies*, pp. viii-xxii (p. xvi).

⁴⁴ Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. xix.

⁴⁵ Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. xix.

⁴⁶ Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. xx.

⁴⁷ Jeremy Davies, *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature* (London, New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁴⁸ Davies, 'Preface' in *Bodily Pain*, pp. xi-xiv (p. xi).

21), pointing out how even sensationlessness can become a pained absence that alerts one to felt sensation of loss:

Ah! would't were so with many
 A gentle girl and boy!
 But were there ever any
 Writhed not at passèd joy?
 The feel of not to feel it,
 When there is none to heal it,
 Nor numbèd sense to steel it,
 Was never said in rhyme ('In Drear-Nightèd December', 17-24).

In Keats's short 1817 lyric, 'In Drear-Nightèd December', numbness does not straightforwardly indicate an absolute annihilation of feeling but exists in complex relation to joy and sorrow. Keats creates both an alliance and a distinction between 'the feel of not to feel it' (21) and 'numbèd sense' (23), spotlighting the central investigation of the poem: namely, the difficulty of articulating feelings as ambiguous as absence and loss. The final stanza of the poem weighs the pleasure of 'sweet forgetting' (13) against the pain of 'passèd joy' (20). Both states bespeak an experience of absent feeling, but the latter suggests an agonised self-awareness of the sensation, or the 'feel of not to feel it' (21), while the former emphasises a blissful ignorance to such loss. 'The feel of not to feel' initially seems straightforwardly to describe the sensation of numbness. Yet as the stanza progresses, the suggestion that 'numbèd sense' might 'steel' and relieve the pain of such a sensation complicates the reader's understanding of the condition that Keats is attempting to describe, drawing attention to the multifaceted and conflicted nature of numbness in his poetry. Keats explores sensationlessness as one of the qualities of numbness. Sensationlessness calls attention to vacancy, proposing a bodily absence that is always shadowed and defined by the 'sense' that it appears to negate. The poem gives presence to the experience of absent feeling by articulating it within a definable lexicon of pain: the sensation of lost pleasure causes one to writhe. Yet the pronoun 'it' in line 21, which initially appears to refer simply to 'passèd joy' (20), has an increasingly uncertain referent as it is repeated throughout the final lines of the third stanza. Keats's use of two subordinate clauses in lines 22 and 23 alongside this unspecified pronoun complicates the sense of the stanza. 'It' becomes removed from the sensation it initially seems to describe so that by

its third repetition the pronoun is almost self-referential, implying an elusive quality that the speaker cannot fully articulate. As Alvin Whitley explains:

The insolubly loose grammatical structure of the third stanza forms a maddening barrier to any neat or absolute resolution of the meaning or unity of the whole poem. Are ‘Writh’d not of passed joy’ and ‘The feel of not to feel it’ to be taken as appositives, however vague, or is there a distinct break between the two? ‘It’ in line 21 may signify ‘anything’ or may refer to ‘passed joy’.⁴⁹

‘It’ at once demands to be assigned to an experience as specific as ‘passèd joy’ (20), even as it acts as a substitute signifier for a feeling that is vague and outside of language. ‘It’ is a sensation that cannot but numbed, healed, or properly understood. That sensationlessness is characterised as an ailment or wound that ‘numbèd sense’ (23) can remove or steal (23) away, highlights the therapeutic status of numbing for Keats, implying that sensationlessness and numbness are not synonymous concepts in the poem. Whereas ‘the feel of not to feel’ (21) is ‘alert to the presence of absence’,⁵⁰ as McDowell writes, ‘numbèd sense’ (23) ostensibly suggests that which is annihilated or completely deadened to the conscious mind and feeling body. Yet such an opposition is complicated by Keats’s use of wordplay in line 23. John Barnard explains that whereas the first publication of the poem in 1829 in *The Literary Gazette* used the verb ‘steel’ in line 23, the surviving manuscript of the lyric written in Keats’s hand reads ‘steal’.⁵¹ Barnard argues that “‘Steal’ is a possible reading, but is probably an error”.⁵² Yet Keats’s self-consciousness of ‘rhyme’ (24) and the aurality of poetic expression in this stanza suggests that the line remains open to both interpretations of the word. By making both readings available, Keats creates a homophonic pun whose oxymoronic implications work in tension with one another. The line simultaneously indicates that ‘numbèd sense’ (23) can steal away the pangs of ‘passèd joy’ (20), removing consciousness of the void left by absent feeling, as well as proposing that numbness might strengthen and intensify such a sensation. The line is additionally open to the idea that numbness is able to ‘steel’ or harden one to face up to and endure this experience of loss. If numbness ‘steels’, then it is not straightforwardly definable

⁴⁹ Alvin Whitley, ‘The Autograph of Keats’s “In Drear Nighted December”’, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 5 (1951), pp. 116-122 (p. 121).

⁵⁰ Stacey McDowell, ‘Shiftiness in Keats’s “Ode on Indolence”’, *Romanticism*, 23 (2017), pp. 27-37 (p. 30).

⁵¹ See notes for pp. 217-18 in *John Keats the Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard, p. 612.

⁵² See notes for pp. 217-18 in *John Keats the Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard, p. 612.

as a ‘degree-zero state’ of insensibility,⁵³ as Michael O’Neill writes of the ‘Ode on Indolence’, but is presented as a condition that is analogous with ‘the feel of not to feel’ (21), giving even greater presence to the sensation of loss and vacancy. Numbness is a slippery and unstable concept in Keats’s imagination that not only encompasses various meanings and amorphous connotations, but also intersects with and works to trouble neat definitions of pleasure and pain.

‘I Love to Mark Sad Faces in Fair Weather’

Encountering the world as ‘A thing of beauty’ (*Endymion*, I, 1) as well as a ‘Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways’ (*John Keats: Letters II*, 102), Keats shows how painful and pleasurable feelings intermingle to produce countless combinations of experiences, each of which shape or ‘school’ (*John Keats: Letters II*, 102) identity, thought, and the imagination. For Keats, pleasure and pain are both reactions to existence, as well as sensations that modify our encounter with and perceptions of the world. ‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’, enjoys ‘mark[ing] sad faces in fair weather / And hear[ing] a merry laugh amid the thunder’ (‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’, 5-6), making it unclear if the speaker delights in passively observing how the sorrow and mirth of others is often contrasted to their surroundings, or if the speaker is actively engaged in reading in the external signs of ‘fair and foul’ (‘Welcome Joy, and Welcome Sorrow’, 7) weather the presence of its opposite. When filtered through the imagination of the speaker, pleasant weather might acquire a sad countenance just as thunder might begin to sound like laughter. Keats’s poetry is sensitive to how the sensations and attitudes of each individual in any given moment affect their interpretation of the world. Fascinated by the affective nature of experience, Keats not only investigates the sensory and cognitive lives of the characters within each poem, but also explores and manipulates the sensations of those reading the poem; the reader becomes a central part of Keats’s exploration of the connections between pleasure and pain. This thesis follows Donald C. Goellnicht in reading Keats as a forebear of reader response theory and as a poet whose open-mindedness — his insistence on the creative and intellectual possibilities of remaining in ‘uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 193) — not only evokes the frustration of interpretive ambiguity, but also invites space for the reader’s entry and participation. Poetic meaning is co-

⁵³ O’Neill, “‘The Reading of an Ever-Changing Tale’: Keats (I)’ in *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, pp. 180-209 (p. 204).

created in a mutually pleasurable ‘textual intercourse’ between poet and reader.⁵⁴ As Tilottama Rajan puts it, Romanticism foregrounds the reading process to develop ‘literature in which the text is a heuristic stimulus rather than a finished product’ so that the relation between pleasure and pain is not fixed,⁵⁵ but instead shifts between the varying responses and interpretations of individual readers. Rather than claiming that there is a single relationship between pleasure and pain that remains constant in every Keats poem, this thesis follows Keats’s belief in the inexhaustible diversity of man’s experiences to argue for multiple interconnections between joy and sorrow that are worked out in each individual poem. It adopts the methods of Stanley Fish in understanding poetic meaning to be constituted by ‘the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words [of the poem] as they succeed one another in time’,⁵⁶ arguing that any understanding of pleasurable pain in Keats cannot be divorced from the imaginative, cognitive, and affective reactions of individual readers to the linguistic and formal choices of each poem. If the formal limitations of the sonnet are a ‘pained loveliness’ (‘If by dull Rhymes Our English Must be Chained’, 3) that paradoxically enable poetic innovation and creative freedom for the poet, then Keats shows how the ‘industrious’ (‘If By Dull Rhymes’, 9) ear of the reader is necessary for such artistic freedom. In this poem, Keats reads and responds to his poetic forebears by experimenting with the sonnet form, hinting at Shakespearean and Petrarchan modes before pulling away from such literary traditions through enjambed syntax and unanticipated breaks from the rhyme-scheme. This manipulation of form demonstrates Keats’s skill as a reader who is able to ‘weigh the stress / Of every chord’, ‘sound and syllable’ (‘If By Dull Rhymes’, 7-8 and 10), as well as revealing how interpretation is bound to the poet’s formal choices and the delicate interweavings of poetic language. Keats positions the poet as a reader as well as drawing attention to the actual reader as a co-creator of poetic meaning, showing how we can neither fully use nor ignore the interpretive framework provided by the sweet fetters (‘If By Dull Rhymes’, 2) of the traditional sonnet form. Comprehension is both pleurably enabled and painfully disabled by formal experimentation. This thesis takes up Keats’s call for the reader to attend to the sounds and stresses of poetic language, honouring his exploratory understanding of poetry by seeing ‘what may be gained / By ear industrious’ (‘If By Dull Rhymes’, 8-9). It adopts a new-formalist approach to interpretation, showing how

⁵⁴ Donald C. Goellnicht, ‘Keats on Reading: “Delicious Diligent Indolence”’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 88 (1989), pp. 190-210 (p. 193) and (p. 196).

⁵⁵ Tilottama Rajan, ‘The Supplement of Reading’, *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, 17 (1986), pp. 573-594 (p. 587).

⁵⁶ Stanley E. Fish, ‘Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics’ in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins (London; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 70-100 (p. 73).

close attention to poetic form and language necessitates and is complementary to other critical perspectives that allow us to comprehend more fully Keats's investigation of pleasure and pain. Alongside formalist analysis, this thesis draws upon Keats's letters as well as the historical and medical contexts of Keats's works to flesh out Keats's engagement with joy and sorrow. Following Susan Wolfson in *Formal Charges* and *The Questioning Presence*,⁵⁷ Helen Vendler in *The Odes of John Keats*,⁵⁸ and Michael O'Neill in *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*,⁵⁹ this thesis agrees with Wolfson's insight that 'formal elements do not exist "apart" from but play a part in the semantic order', showing how 'choices of form and the way it is managed often signify as much as, and as part of, words themselves'.⁶⁰ By closely reading the linguistic, generic, and aesthetic nuances of Keats's poems, this thesis seeks to reveal how pleasure and pain intermingle in Keats's imagination and how the reader is implicated in this exploration. The sounds, shapes, and dynamic movements of poetic form and language become Keats's testing ground for teasing apart and glancing into the intricate strands that bind together painful pleasure and pleasurable pain so that it is only by paying close attention to the complexities of the poem that we can begin to understand how Keats experiments with joy and sorrow.

The 'Intensity of Working Out Conceits'

This thesis is structured into five chapters, each of which discuss a different element of Keats's exploration of the relationship between pleasure and pain. It focusses on Keats's most productive year of poetic composition, looking at those poems written between September 1818 and September 1819, the respective months in which Keats began *Hyperion* and abandoned *The Fall of Hyperion*. This thesis hones in on this important and productive period of poetic composition as a point during which Keats rigorously experimented with poetic form and genre, eagerly exploring the relationship between sensation and thought, even as he experienced 'the fever, and the fret' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 23) of needing to make money in the literary marketplace, the heartache of loving Fanny Brawne, and the painful onset of pulmonary tuberculosis. Keats's sense that the concentrated form of Shakespeare's sonnets was

⁵⁷ Susan J. Wolfson, *Formal Charges The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Wolfson, *The Questioning Presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the Interrogative Mode in Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

⁵⁸ Helen Vendler, *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁵⁹ Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁶⁰ Wolfson, 'Formal Intelligence Formalism, Romanticism, and Formalist Criticism' in *Formal Charges*, pp. 1-30 (p. 3).

a poetic space in which ‘fine things [were] said unintentionally — in the intensity of working out conceits’ (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 188) provides a wider model for understanding Keats’s poetic method at this time, as well as his approach to pleasurable pain. Keats’s imagination was at its most animated and fruitful during the intensity of ‘working things out’, in that year of his short life when he was frantically writing and experimenting within poetry. In ‘the intensity of working out’ the many relationships between pleasure and pain, Keats wrote some of his most profound and beautiful lines of poetry, leading his readers through ‘the verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways’ of ‘embalmèd darkness’ to seduce us into becoming ‘half in love with easeful Death’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 40, 43, and 52).

The first chapter focusses on the status of weeping in *Isabella, Or the Pot of Basil*, exploring how tears are represented as both a response to imagined pleasures, as well as a symptom of grief and psychological anguish. Disheartened by his experience of writing *Endymion*, Keats became sceptical of ‘golden-tongued Romance’ (‘On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again’, 1), mistrusting the popular tastes of a regency audience who he believed were unable to judge the complexities of his engagement with the romance genre. And yet rather than turning away from romance, Keats harnessed the genre to explore this ‘fierce dispute’ between the ‘barren dream’ of romantic fancy and the ‘impassioned clay’ (‘On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again’, 5, 12, and 6) of man’s richest emotional states. Animated by the psycho-physiological status of tears, *Isabella* explores how the passions of the mind affect physical alterations on the body as well as how sensory impressions impact upon and alter the mind. Keats brings together multiple ‘department[s] of knowledge’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 277) in this poem, integrating his medical understanding of the nervous system with his poetic exploration of the romance genre so as to deepen his investigation of how tears occupy a liminal status between pleasure and pain. This opening chapter argues that in *Isabella*, tears are a site in which the pleasures of romance intersect with the pains of tragic reality.

The second chapter continues to investigate how Keats understood selfhood to be disrupted and altered by encounters with grief and loss, centring on the characterisation of Saturn so as to explore the relationship between pain and identity in *Hyperion. A Fragment*. In an April 1819 letter to his brother and sister-in-law on ‘soul-making’, Keats explains how man must encounter ‘Pains and troubles’ in order to experience the benefits of ‘alterations and perfectionings’ (*Letters: John Keats* II, 103). *Hyperion* tests and critiques this hypothesis. If man’s identity is to be shaped and developed through the heart’s encounter with pain, then

Hyperion shows how one must be both patient and physician: the person subjected to physical or psychological torment as well as the one who is necessarily abstracted from such suffering in order to read into and understand it. Sympathetic identification becomes a means by which Keats allows both his characters and readers to observe and interpret suffering at the same time as they experience vicarious sensations of pain. While such an encounter with pain propels the sufferer into a deeper level of understanding, this chapter argues that in *Hyperion*, the benefits of personal growth and knowledge that one obtains is the cause of fresh anguish.

Expanding upon how Keats observes and also forces the reader to witness scenes of suffering, chapter three focusses on the pleasurable pains and painful pleasures of spectatorship in *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes*. In *The Fall of Hyperion*, the sympathetic capacity of the poet-physician is described as a ‘balm’ (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 201) and a possible means by which the world’s sufferings might be shared and even lessened. But while Adam Smith repeatedly describes the sympathiser as a spectator of suffering in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,⁶¹ acknowledging the necessity for the sympathiser to look at scenes of pain, Keats follows eighteenth-century sympathy theorists in remaining sensitive to the perverse experience of delight that also underlies such acts of sympathetic spectatorship. This chapter argues that in *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats establishes an uncomfortable proximity between those who sympathise with another’s suffering and those who find pleasure in spectacles of pain. Whereas *The Fall of Hyperion* alerts the reader to the delight we experience in observing anguish, *The Eve of St Agnes* makes the reader uncomfortable around and even pained by ‘visions of delight’ (*Eve of St Agnes*, VI, 47). This chapter defines ‘spectacles of pleasure’ as those scenes in which Keats encourages the reader to enjoy the act of watching another’s experience of delight, arguing that by appealing to the reader’s erotic imagination, Keats hints at the transgressive nature of gazing ‘all unseen’ (*Eve*, IX, 80), making us suspicious of the impropriety of poetic vision. This chapter argues that when read together, *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes* reveal how Keats makes the reader both attracted to and repelled by spectacles of pleasure and pain.

The Eve of St Agnes hints at the capacity for poetic language to hoodwink the reader by means of evoking transgressive visual pleasure. *Lamia*, on the other hand, fully commits to such

⁶¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Printed for A. Millar, A. Kincaid, and J. Bell, 1759), p. 5.

deceit, foregrounding the doubtful nature of pleasure and the trickster status of visuality. Chapter four explores how the ‘truth’ status of pleasure in *Lamia* is thrown into a negatively capable condition of ‘uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 193); a state that the reader is forced to remain in, but to be discontent with. The sensuality of Lamia’s woman’s body is a source of intense bliss for Lycius. But her uncertain status as a victimised, ‘penanced lady elf’ (*Lamia*, I, 55) or the predatory ‘demon’s self’ (*Lamia*, I, 56) alerts the reader to the possible dangers of her illusory charms, not only threatening to compromise Lycius’s experience of pleasure, but also encouraging the reader towards analytical choice-making that would eschew Lamia’s impossible liminality and eliminate the presence of that which is potentially fallacious. This chapter argues that Keats ‘creates the intense pleasure of not knowing’ at the same time as he provokes the reader toward a painfully unfulfilled desire to solve the ‘knotty problem’ (*Lamia*, II, 160) of Lamia’s mysterious being.⁶² The impurity of pleasure both heightens and troubles the reader’s experience of poetic delight.

The final chapter widens the scope of this thesis to explore how pleasure and pain exist in relation with numbness in Keats’s 1819 spring odes. As dresser to the clumsy and reckless surgeon William Lucas at a time before the use of effective surgical anaesthesia,⁶³ Keats would have been on the front-line of surgical operations, restraining patients, administering tourniquets, disposing of amputated body parts, and dressing wounds. His encounter with bodily pain would have been both gruesome and harrowing and his experiences in the operating theatres and hospital wards of St Thomas and Guy’s would have shown him how the treatment of the diseased and ailing body was frequently more painful and dangerous than the conditions medicine was endeavouring to remedy. Attempts to anaesthetise the body in pain repeatedly caused additional suffering for the patient, at times contributing the crushing agony of compressed nerves or the cruel sting that came with freezing a limb. Pain was not only a condition that was potentially fatal to medicate, but was also paradoxically considered a desirable state for patients to experience. If the loss of blood during surgery was tantamount to a draining of the vital principle, as physicians such as John Hunter proposed, then pain acted as ‘a vital stimulant which worked to protect the body during a risky time’.⁶⁴ Drawing upon

⁶² ‘Keats’s Paradise Lost: a Digital Edition’, *The Keats Library*, <<http://keatslibrary.org/paradise-lost/>>, book I (p. 23).

⁶³ Roe explains how Lucas was ‘neat-handed but reckless with his knife. Tall, ungainly and awkward, he had few surgical skills’. Roe, ‘J.K., and Other Communications’ in *John Keats*, pp. 82- 96 (p. 91).

⁶⁴ Stephanie J. Snow, ‘Introduction’ in *Blessed Days of Anaesthesia: How Anaesthetics Changed the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 14.

Keats's awareness of experiments with anaesthesia within Romantic medicine, this chapter shows how numbness in Keats's spring odes does not indicate the removal of all felt sensation, but is at some points a painfully felt experience of absence, at others a pleasurable ache that animates the creative imagination. This chapter argues that the painful negation of sense in Keats's odes frequently contains pleasurable imaginative and intellectual possibilities.

'Feeling for Light and Shade'

This thesis offers a vital examination of how Keats's poetry navigates the relationship between pleasure and pain, thinking through how the fecund space between these apparently oppositional affective states is filled with the 'uncertainties, mysteries, doubts' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193) that most excited Keats's negatively capable imagination. Joy and sorrow are experiences that Keats's poetry refuses to define, knowing that 'never will the prize, / High reason, and the lore of good and ill, / Be my award!' ('To J. H. Reynolds, Esq', 74-76). Pleasure and pain, 'good and ill', are not sensations that abide by strict and unchanging laws for Keats, but experiences that resist the 'philosophiz[ings]' of 'high reason' so as to 'tease us out of thought' ('To J. H. Reynolds, Esq', 73, 75, and 77). For Keats, pleasurable pain and painful pleasure are felt experiences that prompt the mind to think even as they resist intellectualisation, drawing away from us to leave only 'dim conceived glories of the brain' ('On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 9). It is how pleasure and pain tease, elude, and develop the mind that repeatedly become the focus of Keats's greatest artistic achievements. In his last surviving letter, written to Charles Brown on the 30th November 1820 from his sick bed in Rome, Keats wrote how poetic creation is animated by and even dependent upon 'the knowledge of contrast[s]' and that 'feeling for light and shade' (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 360); conditions that are always carefully weighed against each other in Keats's poems. While Keats's letter regrets how such creativity weakens his already failing health, he nevertheless describes how even in his darkest and most painful hours, when his ship was quarantined off the coast of Naples, he 'summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year' of his life (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 360). Even when physical pain tormented his body and emotional suffering plagued his mind, Keats's imagination necessarily and despairingly sought for the relief of humour in 'the midst of a great darkness' (*Letters: John Keats* II, 80), remaining alert to the pleasure that language and wordplay might offer. This thesis shows how Keats's poetry is at its richest and most intellectually demanding when he is 'feeling for light and shade' (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 360), when he is passionately exploring and eagerly pursuing those painful and pleasurable sensations that are fundamental to human existence.

**Chapter One: ‘She Weeps alone for Pleasures not to be’: The Science and Romance of
Tears in
Isabella; Or, the Pot of Basil**

Images of tears, weeping and the lachrymose pervade the poetic language, characterisation, and narrative events of *Isabella; Or, the Pot of Basil*.¹ As a poem that is saturated with the ‘Too many tears’ (*Isabella*, XII, 90) of its main characters, Keats ostensibly rejected *Isabella* for being overly sentimental or ‘mawkish’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 162), ‘too smokeable’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 174) in its potential to be ridiculed by an undiscerning public, and supposedly containing too much ‘simplicity of knowledge’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 174). Despite these reservations, *Isabella* was both published and ascribed a position of importance in the title of Keats’s celebrated 1820 volume: *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes and Other Poems*. Keats’s attitude towards *Isabella*’s ‘sober sadness’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 174) remained ambivalent. On the one hand, the sickly-sweet nature of excessive crying in the romance genre represented the disingenuous, ‘barren tragedy tears’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 186) of a disengaged regency audience who consumed popular literature without careful attention to the nuances of form, language, and genre that Keats’s poetry demands. However, Keats was also conscious that depictions of crying provided fertile ground for an exploration of the relationship between the body and mind so that tears took on a depth of meaning that transcended the limitations and simplicity of the popular imagination. Keats’s letter to Reynolds of 3rd May 1818, written only six days after completing *Isabella*, shows how Keats was reconsidering his knowledge of medicine and thinking about his medical books at the time he was writing in the romance genre (*Letters: John Keats* I, 276-277).² In his anatomical and physiological notebook, Keats describes sensation as ‘an impression made on the Extremities of the Nerves conveyed to the brain’ and volition as ‘the contrary of Sensation it proceeds from the internal to the external parts’ (*John Keats Note Book*, 55-56).³ It is this oscillation between internal and external existence that is a central concern of *Isabella* in which the ceaseless production of tears is the consequence of a disordered psyche. The psycho-physiological status of tears represented an opportunity for Keats to bring together multiple ‘department[s] of knowledge’

¹ The poem hereafter will be referred to as *Isabella*.

² See ‘Introduction’ pp. 15-17 for a more detailed analysis of this section of Keats’s 3rd May 1818 letter.

³ John Keats, *Keats’s Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, ed. by Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934). All subsequent references will hereafter be cited parenthetically.

(*Letters: John Keats I*, 277), the medical and the poetic, so as to explore the mystery of an action as apparently simple and instinctive as weeping.

Jack Stillinger's seminal work on *Isabella* draws upon graphic images of medicine, disease, exhumation, and decapitation in the poem to argue that these elements of realism 'allow for a new view of *Isabella* as an anti-romance'.⁴ Yet Keats's engagement with the romance genre is more complex than Stillinger proposes. *Isabella*'s 'complete separation from the physical world' after the murder and exhumation of Lorenzo,⁵ does not simply show a retreat inwards to the biological realities and maladies of the brain and central nervous system. *Isabella*'s withdrawal into the unexplained depths of internal existence represents an engagement with and a movement beyond contemporary medical and biological accounts of an embodied mind and into the illogical spaces of the imagination and the unconscious. Keats explores the irrational depths of emotion and complex meanings of the psyche through the romance genre. *Isabella* is not an 'anti-romance' in the way Stillinger proposes, but a poem whose layering of multiple genres works to renovate, interrogate, and experiment with literary and scientific traditions. *Isabella* is as committed to romance as it is to biological realism. *Isabella* moves into a life conducted within a deteriorating yet vivid imagination in which to kiss and to weep (*Isabella*, LI, 408) over a severed head are the actions of a woman fraught with both an unsatiated desire for sexual intimacy and the grief of a mourning lover. *Isabella* 'weeps alone for pleasures not to be' (XXX, 233) so that tears are erotically charged as well as symptomatic of emotional pain. This chapter draws upon the science of volition and the central nervous system alongside Keats's treatment of literary genre to argue that tears are a locus through which the bodily and emotional pleasures of romance come into contact with the physical and psychological pains of tragic reality. Poetry becomes, for Keats, a 'mode of knowing' and exploring how poetry might 'know' tears is a central preoccupation of *Isabella*.⁶

Lovesickness and the Cliché of Crying

As an act of volition, crying is dependent upon the activities of the brain and central nervous system so that an understanding of Keats's neuroanatomical knowledge is important to a consideration of tears in *Isabella*. Yet why the brain responds to certain sensory information

⁴ Jack Stillinger, 'Keats and Romance: The "Reality" of *Isabella*' in *The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems* (Urbana; London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 31-45 (p. 37).

⁵ Stillinger, 'The "Reality" of *Isabella*', p. 43.

⁶ Michael O'Neill, 'Poetry as Literary Criticism', *The Arts and Sciences of Criticism*, ed. David Fuller and Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), p. 123 (pp. 117-136).

through the act of crying remains unknown and is subject only to conjecture, both in Romantic and contemporary science. As Marco Menin argues:

While at first glance it might seem that they are governed by the laws of fluid dynamics, tears do in fact have a high degree of complexity and ambiguity (they are transparent objects that appear even as they flow and disappear) and highlight how certain aspects of the dynamics of organic processes cannot in fact be explained on the basis of mechanical hypotheses alone.⁷

To see into tears is to see beyond or through the physiological processes that support their manifestation and into the complex mental states that are their point of origin. As such, fluidity is not only a physical attribute of tears, but also a governing principle that helps to explain their ambiguity. Poised on the margin of internal existence and external reality, tears occupy a state somewhere between that which is deeply intimate and subjective, and a material substance or ‘transparent object’ which is distinct from our being. Moving beyond scientific and ‘mechanical hypotheses’, Keats considers the obscurity of weeping as a part of ‘the Burden of the Mystery’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 277), an unexplained phenomenon that is explored and speculated upon through the romance genre in *Isabella*. Romance becomes the means by which Keats investigates the ‘dark passageways’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 281) that connect psychological experience with physiological reality.

In his analysis of Keats’s engagement with the romance genre, Robert Kern suggests that ‘of all imaginative modes romance is the most basic and inclusive, the poetic act inherently and unavoidably constituting a world elsewhere’.⁸ Kern argues against Stillinger by showing that in *The Eve of St Agnes*:

it is not imagination that is being criticized, in the sense of romantic tendencies to exceed the realm of strict, empirical fact, but an essentially negative and exclusive form of imagination, one that turns away from the real rather than toward it [...] [Keats] celebrate[s] the possibilities of alliance between the imagination and reality.⁹

⁷ Marco Menin, “‘Who Will Write the History of Tears?’” *History of Ideas and History of Emotions from Eighteenth-Century France to the Present*, *History of European Ideas*, 40 (2014), pp. 516-532 (p. 517).

⁸ Robert Kern, ‘Keats and the Problems of Romance’ in *The Philological Quarterly*, 58 (1979), pp. 171-191 (p. 174).

⁹ Kern, ‘Keats and the Problems of Romance’, p. 183.

The romance genre threatens ‘escapism, solipsism, avoidance’ of ‘the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts’ (‘Sleep and Poetry’, 124-125) and an irresponsible retreat into the fictional pleasures of the imagination,¹⁰ even as it functions as ‘a category of experience or a mode of perception’ that enables the poet to envisage aspects of reality that empirical evidence cannot explain.¹¹ Keats dramatises this tension in *Isabella* in which the coming together of physiological reality and the romantic imagination is established through tears in the opening lines of the poem; crying is set up as a biological function that is stimulated by the uncontrolled imaginings of dreaming lovers. Weeping is dependent upon absence in the poem, wherein Keats stresses the enigma of tears even as he uses them to show how absence is a site of potential that moves the mind to dream:

Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love’s eye!
 They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
 Without some stir of heart, some malady;
 [...]
 They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
 But to each other dream, and nightly weep’ (I, 2-8).

From the opening stanza of the poem, tears are symptomatic of love-sickness, occupying a liminal status between pleasure and pain. Weeping is the consequence of Isabella and Lorenzo’s mutual desire, whereby a retreat within to a world of ‘dream’ and imagination enables the lovers to fantasise about one another, even as they suffer from an inability to actualise these imaginings. This inhabiting of internal existence leads Rachel Schulkins to read *Isabella* as a ‘masturbatory romance; that is when romantic love becomes the sole reason for existence after society and reality are discarded for the pleasures of the mind’s private indulgence in dreams and fancy’.¹² As a bodily fluid that is generated in the absence of physical intimacy, tears are an intrinsic part of this masturbatory experience in *Isabella*. Crying is akin to ejaculation, stimulated through the privacy of imaginings that enact experiences that Isabella and Lorenzo fail to undergo in reality. Such onanistic escape is not only one undergone by Isabella and Lorenzo, but also an experience that Keats recreates for the reader in the opening

¹⁰ Kern, ‘Keats and the Problems of Romance’, p. 173.

¹¹ Kern, ‘Keats and the Problems of Romance’, p. 177.

¹² Rachel Schulkins, ‘The Economy of Romance in Keats’s *Isabella*’ in *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation*, p. 73.

stanza.¹³ The repeated use of the negative sentence construction ‘they could not’ requires the reader to imagine what is happening in the narrative by being told what is not occurring. The reader is not only lead to infer what thoughts and emotions are causing such distressing physiological symptoms for Isabella and Lorenzo, but also to speculate upon the nature and content of dreams which are capable of generating tears. Crying is not simply a narrative event that the reader voyeuristically observes in the poem, but a phenomenon that we are required to consider and reflect upon.

The pleasures of the fantasising mind also manifest as a bodily response from Isabella and Lorenzo, which in turn effects the accuracy of their visual perceptions of external reality. Tears connect the internal pleasures of romantic dreaming with external sensations of bodily sickness and discomfort. This is framed in the first couplet of the poem through the pairing of the verb ‘sleep’ with ‘weep’ by which Keats uses rhyme to suggest that crying is dependent upon the unspecified activities of the unconscious imagination. In the first stanza of the poem, Keats’s choice of rhyme words establishes an important relationship between romantic desire, disease, and the optical. The first ‘b’ rhyme of the *ottava rima* in lines 2 and 4, for example, creates an interdependence between the nouns ‘eye’ and ‘malady’, producing a dissonant half-rhyme that hints at the pathological potential of crying and the optical. The bodies of Isabella and Lorenzo become ‘ill’ (V, 37), ‘thin’ (V, 35), and ‘fever’d’ (VI, 46) as they obsess over one another and weep at the thought of their unsatiated desire. Such fixation on romantic fantasies acquires acute force for Isabella and Lorenzo so that it not only weakens their bodies and dominates their nightly dream visions, but also distorts their external sight: ‘He might not in house, field, or garden stir, / But her full shape would all his seeing fill’ (II, 11-12). In his investigation into ways of seeing romantically in *Lamia*, Paul Endo argues that ‘rather than reductively opposing disenchantment to enchantment, [Keats] foregrounds the mechanisms of romance — seeing, anticipating, and plotting — as they contribute to the very shaping of reality’.¹⁴ Endo rightly identifies the sensitivity of Keats’s engagement with the romance genre in *Lamia*, but he does not comment on how *Isabella* also uses romantic vision to problematise the relationship between romance and reality. Like *Lamia*, *Isabella* dismantles the opposition between enchantment and disenchantment, dramatising how the romantic imagination can manipulate

¹³ Most famously, Byron suggested that Keats’s 1820 volume: *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes and Other Poems* enacted for the reader ‘a sort of mental masturbation — he [Keats] is always frigging his imagination’. Byron, *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, p. 225. See Marjorie Levinson, *Keats’s Life of Allegory: The Origins of Style* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) for a fuller discussion on Keats’s ‘masturbatory dynamics’.

¹⁴ Paul Endo, ‘Seeing Romantically in *Lamia*’, *ELH*, 66 (1999), pp. 111-128 (p. 111).

and shape one's visual perception of the external world. In lines 11 and 12, the distinction between Lorenzo's imagination and external reality is unclear. Keats makes the reader view narrative happenings through Lorenzo's eyes so that it is uncertain whether Isabella inhabits these three separate settings alongside her lover or if the reader is viewing a projected image of her from Lorenzo's imagination. Keats uses the verb 'fill' to describe how the 'shape' of Isabella enters into Lorenzo's line of vision, employing anastrophe to elevate this verb to a position of importance as a rhyme word, bringing the action of 'filling' into sharper focus. In the same way tears cover over the optical lens and affect one's ability to see clearly, the thought of Isabella is so strong and vivid for Lorenzo that it fills 'all his seeing' (II, 12), manipulating and thwarting his perception of reality. Isabella becomes analogous to tears for Lorenzo, making his 'cheeks paler' (IV, 26), preventing him from speaking (V, 37), causing his heart to 'beat awfully against his side' (VI, 42), and altering his experience of what is and is not real.

By showing how lovesickness can thwart an accurate perception of reality, *Isabella* highlights Keats's scepticism towards the ability for romantic clichés to represent authentic and unique personal experiences of romantic intimacy, throwing into question the sincerity of Lorenzo and Isabella's love for one another. The poem's depiction of swooning lovers who, with 'sick longing' (III, 23), proclaim their desires 'to their pillows' (IV, 31) as they cry themselves to sleep, leads critics to read the opening stanzas of *Isabella* as a parody of sentimental love that ridicules the empty traditions of the romance genre. Such a reading ostensibly demonstrates Keats's rejection of romantic tropes, positioning *Isabella* in the realm of 'anti-romance' in the way Stillinger proposes. Yet Keats's interrogation of romance does not represent a rejection of the genre, but instead highlights a self-conscious engagement with the form. Katey Castellano, for example, argues that: 'Keats's unflinching investigation of the way erotic love not only evokes but is also motivated by cliché, [...] may well expose the pervasive role of fantasy in Western social constructions of erotic love'.¹⁵ Keats not only depicts love through familiar stereotypes, but he also has Isabella and Lorenzo internalise romantic traditions so that they are presented as acting out pre-existing notions of what love should be, look, and feel like: "'O may I never see another night, / Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune.'" —' (IV, 29-30). In stanza IV, the use of apostrophe makes Isabella's declaration of love seem like nothing more than a disingenuous rehearsal of worn out romantic tropes. By using quotation marks at this

¹⁵ Katey Castellano, "'Why Linger at the Yawning Tomb so Long?': The Ethics of Negative Capability in Keats's *Isabella* and *Hyperion*", *Partial Answers-Journal and the History of Ideas*, 8 (2010), pp. 23-38 (p. 26).

point in the stanza, Keats indicates that Isabella's sighing exclamation: 'O' is spoken aloud, thereby giving an exaggerated pathos to the tone of her voice that imbues the stanza with subtle comedy. Isabella's sincerity is further brought into question when her suicidal wish to 'never see another night' (IV, 29), if Lorenzo fails to speak his love, is never actualised. Instead, the reader is immediately told in the next lines that the lovers endure 'Honeyless days and days' (IV, 32) apart after their hyperbolic displays of affection. Through having the young lovers perform hackneyed idealisations of romance, Keats anticipates Jean Baudrillard's theories in *The Precession of Simulacra* in which reality is said to simulate that which is preconceived or imagined. As Baudrillard proposes: 'the age of simulation [...] begins with a liquidation of all referentials [...] substituting signs of the real for the real itself'.¹⁶ The language of romance is not simply used to represent Isabella and Lorenzo's love in the poem; rather Isabella and Lorenzo's love simulates the language of romance so that the signs of passion precede their referent. Keats's lovers inhabit a 'hyperreality' in which the 'distinction between the real and the imaginary' is as fluid as the tears they shed.¹⁷ Isabella and Lorenzo's emotions are not complex and rich in meaning, but 'poor [and] simple' (I, 1), wherein Lorenzo is not necessarily fixated on Isabella, but is 'a young palmer' (I, 2) or pilgrim of love itself.

Such dramatic instances of romantic melancholy call into question the depth of Isabella and Lorenzo's emotions for one another. And yet the fact that their outcries take place in the privacy of their bedrooms, without the spectatorship of any onlookers, suggests that this sentimentality is not straightforwardly a superficial performance of romantic affection. As Michael Sider argues, Keats is drawn 'to the rich language of romance, [...] [even though he] is as prone to mock the decadence of this language as he is to imitate it'.¹⁸ It is this indistinct boundary between parodic exaggeration and romantic imitation that led Keats initially to reject *Isabella's* 'amusing sober-sadness' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 174) as 'weak sided' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 174). Despite ostensibly attacking the failings of the poem, Keats's oxymoronic language in his 22nd September 1819 letter to Richard Woodhouse highlights the subtlety of *Isabella's* engagement with genre. 'Sober' suggests a seriousness to Keats's handling of romantic tragedy, even as the letter points out the 'amusing' nature of the poem's treatment of this 'sadness'. Keats's letter is shot through with a concern that *Isabella's* romance is not only

¹⁶ Jean Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), pp. 1556-1566 (p. 1557).

¹⁷ Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', p. 1558.

¹⁸ Michael Sider, 'Isabella and the Dialogism of Romance', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 22 (2000), pp. 329-356 (p. 344).

humorous, but that it also provides nothing deeper than facile entertainment to amuse an audience who fail to look beyond the stereotypes of literary romance. Keats genuinely evokes the romance genre as a part of his imitation of a Boccaccian tale, even as he ridicules romantic traditions in order to highlight the inefficacy of literary tropes at representing the intimacy and passion of love and sexual desire. Keats underscores the inherent liminality of tears, suggesting comedy and tragedy at the same time, so as to withhold any single interpretative framework from the poetry.

The ‘weakness’ that Keats’s letter attacks lies within the understated nature of *Isabella*’s simultaneous employment of comedy and tragedy, wherein we can understand the poem’s soberness to refer to ‘an avoidance of excess’.¹⁹ The use of genre is so subtle in the poem that the reader does not know what an appropriate response to the narrative is. Keats positions himself on the margin between sincerity and insincerity so that it is uncertain whether the reader should laugh or cry at Isabella and Lorenzo’s behaviour: ‘Her lute string gave an echo of his name, / She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same’ (II, 15-16). In the same way that Lorenzo’s vision is distorted by his romantic fixation on Isabella in lines 11 and 12, Isabella’s hearing is also manipulated by her obsession with Lorenzo, wherein she perceives the music of her lute to chime with the same sounds as her lover’s name. The lovers’ fixations produce altered sensory experiences that are ‘pleasanter / [...] than [the] noise of trees’ (II, 13-14) of a reality that they have left behind. And yet Keats also suggests that such manic passion can ruin a text, rather than making it ‘pleasanter’. The reader is not told whether Isabella deliberately stitches Lorenzo’s name into her embroidery, but that her needlework is ‘spoilt’ in this process suggests that this emblazoning was not a part of the original design of the piece. By having Isabella unknowingly sew Lorenzo’s name, Keats pushes the limits of unconscious behaviour to a state that seems unrealistic. The poem again turns to parodic exaggeration, prompting the reader to doubt whether Keats aims to represent love in a wholly serious manner. Through creating a parallel between stitching and writing, Keats suggests that writers who use overwrought clichés in representations of romantic love threaten to spoil their works. Keats uses

¹⁹ See ‘Sober, adj. 1.a’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183706?rskey=bMc74o&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27/3/2017]. Keats was keenly attuned to the multiple meanings and etymologies of words, commenting in the margins of his edition of *Paradise Lost* on how Milton draws out a word’s ‘original and modern meaning combined and woven together, with all its shades of signification’. ‘Keats’s *Paradise Lost*: a Digital Edition’, *The Keats Library*, <<http://keatslibrary.org/paradise-lost/>> [accessed 8/2/2019], book VI (p. 4).

romantic stereotypes paradoxically to propose that dependence upon pre-existing tropes can create a work that is lazily thought out and only ‘half-done’ (II, 16).

Psychosomatics and the Romance of Volition

As a physiological response that is precipitated by internal ideas and emotional states, crying encapsulates this slipperiness between the genuine and the artificial in the poem. Idealisations of romance motivate the lived experiences of Isabella and Lorenzo, their nocturnal weeping and diurnal sighing, and yet their emotional and physiological reactions are very much experienced and ‘proved upon the pulses’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 279). Schulkins notices: ‘As much as the opening lines come to mock the artificiality of sentimental love [...] [t]he lovers’ romantic idealisation and their failure to satiate passion leave them in a state of excessive and consumptive desire, which has a direct consequence on their health’.²⁰ Such physical deterioration, of lovers who are shown ‘waxing pale and dead’ (VII, 53), is not a response that can be straightforwardly faked by the living, breathing body; the artificiality of sentimental romance is again brought into question. Baudrillard argues:

‘Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Some[one] who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms.’ (Littre) [...] simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’. Since the simulator produces ‘true’ symptoms, is he ill or not? Psychology and medicine stop at this point, before a thereafter undiscoverable truth of the illness. [...] Psychosomatics evolves in a dubious way on the edge of the illness principle.²¹

Baudrillard differentiates feigned illness from simulated illness, suggesting that while the former refers to a performance of sickness that has no correspondence to bodily reality, simulated sickness produces real symptoms of disease. For Baudrillard, the difference between ‘true’ sickness and ‘simulated’ sickness is in their point of origin: ‘true illness’ begins in the body and ‘simulated sickness’ in the imagination. Like psychosomatic and placebo responses, in which certain conscious and unconscious thoughts and anxieties become manifest in particular bodily symptoms, simulated illness is produced by either knowingly or unknowingly

²⁰ Schulkins, ‘The Economy of Romance in Keats’s *Isabella*’, p. 75.

²¹ Baudrillard, ‘The Precession of Simulacra’, p. 1558.

imitating preconceived ideas of what sickness or health looks and feels like to the extent of actually producing those symptoms in oneself. It is the ‘dubious’ reality of simulated sickness in which Isabella and Lorenzo participate. Flagging up the uncertain status of truth in psychosomatics, Baudrillard presents certain corporeal experiences as ‘hyperreal’ and beyond the investigations of medical science. Yet, despite being unable to provide a definite conclusion as to the validity of psychosomatic illness, both contemporary and Romantic science investigate the relationship between the mind and body in experiences of sickness. In the same way that Keats exploits the romance genre as a means by which to explore the passageways between how thoughts can affect bodily and emotional sensations, contemporary neuroscience also studies and observes the ‘neurocognitive pathways by which placebo effects operate’.²² A study on ‘The Neural Correlates of Placebo Effects’, for example, uses positron emission tomography (PET) imaging to demonstrate ‘the power of belief over physical outcomes in the body’ where ‘placebos can produce changes in brain activity similar to the pharmacological agents they are replacing’.²³ The study showed that: ‘Though a drug and a placebo may both affect [a particular] brain region, the drug may do so directly, whereas placebo effects are typically mediated by placebo-induced thoughts’.²⁴ Despite operating via different neural pathways, thoughts can carry the same medicinal weight as a drug, affecting the neural activity and chemical composition of the brain.

That a thought or an idea can cause a bodily response such as crying is a notion that is also investigated in the science of volition during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In his seminal work *Zoonomia* (1794), Erasmus Darwin defines sensation and volition in opposition to each other, with ‘one of them commencing at some extremity of the sensorium, and being propagated towards the central parts of it; and the other commencing in the central parts of the sensorium, and being propagated towards the extremities of it’.²⁵ This is a definition which Keats closely echoes in his *Anatomical and Physiological Note Book* when he describes sensation as ‘an impression made on the Extremities of the Nerves conveyed to the brain’ and volition as ‘the contrary of Sensation it proceeds from the internal to the external parts’ (*John Keats Note Book*, 55-56). As a renowned scientist in the decades leading up to Keats’s medical

²² Matthew D. Lieberman et.al, ‘The Neural Correlates of Placebo Effects: A Disruption Account’, *NeuroImage*, 22 (2004), pp. 447-455 (p. 447).

²³ Lieberman et.al, ‘The Neural Correlates of Placebo Effects’, p. 447.

²⁴ Lieberman et.al, ‘The Neural Correlates of Placebo Effects’, p. 447.

²⁵ Erasmus Darwin, “‘Diseases of Volition”, Increased Action of the Muscles’ in Volume II, Class III, *Zoonomia, Or the Laws of Organic Life* (Dublin: 1796), p. 243.

training, as well as a literary figure that explored and published his biological and botanic findings through poetry,²⁶ Darwin is an important influence on Keats's understanding of how man's internal existence comes to manifest itself externally.²⁷ Darwin explores both the physiological process that occurs during the act of crying as well as the causes of weeping, arguing that the:

nasal duct is [...] excited into strong action by sensitive ideas, as in grief, or joy, and then also by its associations with the lacrymal gland it produces a great flow of tears without any external stimulus.²⁸

It is not straightforwardly 'external stimul[i]' or bodily experiences of pleasure and pain that cause one to weep, but instead the abstract and immaterial 'ideas' of 'joy' and 'grief' that excite the 'nasal duct' and 'lacrymal gland' into 'action'. Although Darwin isolates what causes tears and which aspects of the anatomy are involved in the process of crying, he does not suggest why joy and grief are both stimulators of weeping, or why such specific and random parts of the body are affected by 'sensitive' emotions. Despite treating crying anatomically in this section of *Zoonomia*, Darwin's discussion of the 'Secretion of Tears, and of the Lacrymal Sack' only discusses pleasure and pain as 'ideas', without considering how bodily sensations are connected to weeping. If physical hurt and pleasure are dependent upon the sensory nerves signalling to the brain when the body is undergoing an adverse or pleasing sensory experience, then even bodily pleasure and pain are in part dependent upon an immaterial message or concept which the brain must process and interpret in order to understand that experience as painful or pleasurable.²⁹ For Darwin, tears belong to the abstract and illogical world of 'psyche' more than the concrete and observable processes of 'soma'.

²⁶ Like Keats, Darwin is famed for his status as both scientist and poet, publishing his ideas in poems such as *The Botanic Garden* and *The Temple of Nature; Or, the Origin of Society*.

²⁷ Richardson notes how Keats's would have been familiar with the works of Darwin from his studies at Guy's Hospital: 'Priestley and Darwin, Baillie and the Hunters, Beddoes and Lawrence, Bell and Home, all had friends, pupils, or colleagues at Guy's, and their books were in its library, along with works by Gall and Spurzheim, Herder, Blumenbach, Lamarck, and von Humboldt. [...] [Astley Cooper] counted himself a "great admirer of Darwin."' Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', pp. 116-117.

²⁸ Darwin, 'Of the Secretions of Saliva, and of Tears, and of the Lacrymal Sack' in Vol. I, Section XXIV of *Zoonomia*, p. 317.

²⁹ For the gate-control theorists, Ronald Melzack and Patrick Wall, pain is also a simultaneously felt sensation and mental conception. In his discussion of the relationship between pain and language, Jeremy Davies notes how Melzack and Wall suggest that pain is mediated by excitatory and inhibitory interneurons in the spinal cord. These interneurons not only receive signals ascending from the nerves, but also signals descending from the brain. The neural composition of the brain, which is altered by external factors from gender to age, nationality to class, actively affects how the body experiences sensation. As such, the body's experience of pain is dependent upon how the brain interprets sensory data: 'Gate-control theory [...] introduced the now widely accepted idea that

Darwin's indication that an idea precedes the material reality of bodily experiences shows that Romantic science was interested in the proximity between the 'wormy circumstance' (XLIX, 365) of realism and the 'pale shadow[s]' (XXXVI, 281) of the mind. Indicating that: 'the lacrymal gland is [...] excited into action, when we weep at a distressful tale',³⁰ Darwin brings literature into the realm of science by demonstrating how tears can have their origin in the fictional; an idea that was significant for poets and writers at the turn of the century. It was Darwin's discoveries in *Zoonomia*, particularly his investigation of mesmerism, which influenced Coleridge's exploration of how physical disorders can be 'caused or aggravated by psychological factors',³¹ leading Coleridge to coin the term 'psychosomatics'.³² Alan Richardson sites an 1821 fragment from Coleridge's notebook to exemplify the influence of *Zoonomia* on the poet's understanding of how the body is dependent upon the mind:

if "imagination" accounts for mesmeric effects, it could be more generally "extended to the Power, by which a Patient's Mind produces changes in his own body, without any intentional act of the Will — as a Blush, for instance, contagious Yawning, Night-Mair, Fever Phantoms, Palpitation of the Heart <from Fear>".³³

While 'will' and 'volition' are frequently used as synonymous terms in the writings of the period,³⁴ Coleridge draws upon physiological actions such as yawning and hallucinations to propose a separation between these two processes, showing how volition can occur unconsciously and against a person's desire. For Jeremy Davies, this distinction between will, as the "Thought actually causative" to action,³⁵ and volition as "the faculty *instrumental* to the Will [...]" what enables us to carry out the acts that we will ourselves to perform',³⁶ was a

cognitive and affective phenomena do not just exert a psychopathological influence on the experience of pain [...], but are necessarily involved in the organism's processing of pain from the earliest stage. [...] pain [is] an interpretation taking place in relation to lived experience.' Jeremy Davies, 'Romanticism and the Sense of Pain' in *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 15.

³⁰ Darwin, 'Of the Secretions of Saliva' in *Zoonomia*, p. 317

³¹ 'Psychosomatic', *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/153938?redirectedFrom=psychosomatic#eid>> [accessed 13/3/2017].

³² The *OED*, for example, sites Coleridge as the first entry for the use of this term. 'Psychosomatic. adj.1', *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/153938?rskey=H761R6&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 20/02/2019].

³³ Richardson, 'Coleridge and the New Unconscious', p. 43.

³⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, defines 'volition' as 'The power or faculty of willing'. 'Volition' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/224457?redirectedFrom=Volition#eid>> [accessed 15/3/2017].

³⁵ Davies quoting from Coleridge's Notebook (3: 3676) in 'Living Thorns Coleridge and Hartley' in *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature*, p. 114.

³⁶ Davies quoting from Coleridge's letters (3: 489) in 'Living Thorns', p. 114.

fundamental turning point in Coleridge's religious and scientific thinking.³⁷ Yet, *Isabella* both dramatises and goes beyond this separation between will and volition almost three years prior to Coleridge's manuscript note.³⁸ Keats shows how the imagination exacerbates unconscious anxieties, directing one's physiological responses and overcoming will and conscious thought:

His heart beat awfully against his side;
 And to his heart he inwardly did pray
 For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide
 Stifled his voice, and pulsed resolve away —
 Fevered his high conceit of such a bride (VI, 42-46).

In the opening stanzas of the poem, Keats demonstrates with anatomical precision how the imagination unconsciously influences the circulation of blood. Silently brooding over unfulfilled desires causes the blood to drain from Isabella and Lorenzo's faces so that their cheeks grow 'paler' (IV, 26) and 'Isabella's untouched cheek' (V, 33) falls 'sick' (V, 34) and 'thin' (V, 35). Here, the thought of proclaiming his love to Isabella also makes the 'ruddy tide' furiously course through Lorenzo's body, where a racing heart and allusions to a fever highlight how the mind produces symptoms of sickness and 'anguish' (VII, 49). Keats's poetic language dramatises the bodily discomfort and inarticulacy that Lorenzo experiences at this point in the poem, using rhythm and metre to highlight how the heart and bloodstream both stop and start, ebb and flow like the movements of the ocean or 'tide' (VI, 44). The use of enjambment in lines 43 and 44 is followed by strong caesurae after the second feet of the succeeding lines, making the reader pause at the medial points of lines 44 and 45, mimicking how the rushing nature of Lorenzo's circulatory system works to stop and stifle his voice. Employing trochaic rhythms in the first feet of lines 45 and 46, Keats disrupts the regularity of the iambic pentameter to emphasise the first syllable of each foot, suggesting the forcefulness and discomfort of the heart's 'awful' (VI, 42) beat as well as the unpredictability and irregularity

³⁷ Davies explains how Coleridge's understanding of the separation between will and volition led him to turn away from the science and necessitarianism of David Hartley and towards Trinitarianism that posited the freedom of the will: Coleridge was 'prompted to repudiate Hartley's necessitarianism as sophistry that was predicated on eliding two separate mental faculties, will and volition, under the same name, and so failing to discern the true freedom of the will'. Davies, 'Living Thorns', pp. 114-115.

³⁸ Keats demonstrates his understanding of the difference between will and volition in his *Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*. Keats shows how volition can bypass the brain to occur without any conscious motivation of the will: volition 'does not reside entirely in the Brain but partly in ye spinal Marrow which is to be seen in the Behaviour of a Frog after having been guillotined. Of Involuntary Powers. They are supported [by] the nervous System and do not depend upon ye Brain' (*John Keats Note Book*, 56).

of its rhythm. Despite his desire to speak, the volitional activities of the body prevent Lorenzo from enacting the will of his mind.

That Lorenzo's will is unable to control and manipulate the functions of his body initially suggests an inability for the psyche to overcome the processes of soma, an idea that is evident in the image of Lorenzo's 'resolve' being 'pulsed away' (VI, 45). Unlike Lorenzo's painful muteness, Keats eloquently depicts the nuances of subjective experience in line 45 by providing the reader with an insight into the workings of Lorenzo's internal existence that moves beyond his mental life to incorporate the veins and sinews of his physical being. Through emphasising the process of pulsation, Keats describes something as abstract as 'resolve' or determination in visceral terms. Blood quite literally engorges Lorenzo's vocal chords to prevent him from speaking,³⁹ ostensibly demonstrating how the body overcomes the will of the mind. As Richardson suggests:

The heart that conventionally harbors love also, quite inconveniently, registers the fear of rejection by speeding up as anxiety quickens the pulse. Because of the extensive interconnections among the heart, blood, and lungs [...] the 'ruddy tide' of blood chokes up the throat and [...] 'pulses' away his [Lorenzo's] willed behavior.⁴⁰

The will to speak is overcome by the functions of the body for Lorenzo. And yet Richardson also points out how it is the unconscious anxieties of the mind, 'the fear of rejection', that are responsible for quickening the pulse so that it is a volitional process, rooted in the dark and unapprehended passageways of the brain, that directs bodily response. This uncertain relationship between the body and the mind is at its most ambiguous in line 46 when Keats suggests that the pulsating movement of Lorenzo's blood 'Fevered his high conceit of such a

³⁹ See Elizabeth Cook's footnote to line 44 of *Isabella* in 'Notes to pages 185-196' in *John Keats The Major Works*, ed. by Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 585.

⁴⁰ Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', p. 133. Keats's understanding of the complex interconnections of the heart, blood, and lungs, which Richardson notices in *Isabella*, is a direct result of his medical education in which Keats learnt how the different organs of the body work together in sympathy to support life. In his *Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, Keats describes the importance of 'sympathy' in the functions of the human body: '*Sympathy*. By this the Vital Principle is chiefly supported. The function of breathing is a sympathetic action — from irritation produced on the beginning of ye Air tube affects ye Abdominal Muscles and produces coughing' (*John Keats Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, 56-57).⁴⁰ Crying is also an example of a complex sympathetic action in which the pulse increases and the lungs work in tandem with the movement of the diaphragm and the contortion of the facial muscles in order to produce tears.

bride' (VI, 46). Lorenzo's bodily symptoms not only influence his imagination,⁴¹ agitating or 'fevering' his mental conception of Isabella and elevating her to a level of unobtainability as his potential bride. But the wildness (VI, 48) of Lorenzo's 'passion' (VI, 48) for Isabella also causes his physical restlessness, preventing him from sleeping and producing sensations of anguish (VII, 49). For Keats, volition 'arises from a complex system of mental intentions and physiological operations' so that it is uncertain whether the body controls the mind,⁴² or if the mind dictates the movements of the body. Psychosomatics is about the interdependency and inseparability of different departments of existence in *Isabella*, as the reader's attempt to separate the physical from the mental only makes them 'meet again more close' (X, 75).

Tears and 'Spending'

Keats's in-depth knowledge of the circulatory system informs *Isabella's* presentation of weeping. The depiction of Lorenzo's blood in stanza VI highlights how tears are not simply a spent force in the poem, but also a source of vitality and fertility. It is John Hunter's *A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation, and Gun-Shot Wounds* (1794) that informs Keats's physiological accuracy in the description of Lorenzo's 'ruddy tide' (44). Hunter's *Treatise* was widely circulated among scientific and literary circles during Keats's time as a medical student and was taught as a leading text at Guy's Hospital, as Keats's medical notebook attests: 'Mr. Hunter [...] thought the Blood possessed Vitality' (*John Keats Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, 5). Hunter argues that blood not only carries a life force throughout the body, but also is alive in itself: 'not only is the blood alive, but seems to carry life every where [sic] [...] the body dies without the motion of the blood upon it; and the blood dies without the motion of the body upon it'.⁴³ It is this vitality that was also thought to be present in tears. For Hunter and Darwin, the circulation and composition of blood helps to explain the nature of weeping. Hunter divides the components of blood into the coagulable lymph, the serum, and the red globules, suggesting that these different elements of the blood are 'adapted for furnishing the various secretions'.⁴⁴ In particular, it is the serum that Hunter locates in the 'aqueous humour of the eye'.⁴⁵ Darwin develops this idea even further by arguing that 'the lacrymal glands [...]

⁴¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'conceit' as 'Something conceived in the mind; a notion, conception, idea, or thought' as well as 'Senses relating to fancy or wit'. 'Conceit' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38074?rskey=DPGip&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 22/3/2017].

⁴² Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', p. 133.

⁴³ John Hunter, *A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation, and Gun-Shot Wounds* (London: 1794), p. 86.

⁴⁴ Hunter, *A Treatise on the Blood*, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Hunter, *A Treatise on the Blood*, p. 35.

separate the tears from the blood' and pour it on the eyeball.⁴⁶ Even Keats's account of the blood's serum in his medical notebook reads like a description of tears: 'Serum is a transparent fluid of saltish taste and greenish colour' (*John Keats Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, 4). By preceding the depiction of Lorenzo's pulsating heart with the exclamation: "'How ill she [Isabella] is," [...] / If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears' (V, 39), Keats suggests that the draining of tears is analogous to the withering of life in the poem. The paleness, or bloodlessness, that Isabella experiences is at the expense of sustaining her lover's vitality, his racing blood and beating heart; as is evident in the poem's most prominent depiction of tears furnishing the life of the basil plant. Diane Long Hoeveler's suggestion that 'the basil [...] feeds vampire-like on the body of its mother, Isabel' is not only an idea that Keats evokes through the gothic image of the plant being 'fed [...] with thin tears' (LIV, 425),⁴⁷ but it is also a notion supported by the explorations of Romantic science which aligns bleeding and crying as related bodily secretions. In the same way that sperm is a vital fluid that is necessary for the generation of life, tears also contain a vitality necessary for fertility in the poem. *Isabella* is not only a masturbatory poem in the way Schulkins argues,⁴⁸ but also a text that is concerned with the pleasures and pains of sustaining life.

The relationship between tears and spending moves beyond the bodily to take on economic and financial dimensions in *Isabella*. Kurt Heizelman, Susan Wolfson, Diane Long Hoeveler, and Kelvin Everest, amongst others, have commented on how Keats's lower-middle class anxieties over money and the lucrative potential of publishing poetry informs his anti-capitalist portrayal of Isabella's brothers. The brothers view Isabella as a commodity to be sold 'To some high noble and his olive-trees' (XXI, 168) so that, as Everest argues: 'The brothers' motive in their murder is indeed specifically economic; they are alarmed by the possibility of a liaison which will interfere with their plans for Isabella in the market-place'.⁴⁹ Critics rightly focus on how the grim reality of the brothers' scheming and 'exploitative merchant-capitalist mentality' is pitted against the 'simple' (I, 1) romance and 'drowsy ignorance' (XXXIV, 265) of Isabella and Lorenzo. But little has been said of how tears become an essential asset in the brothers' economy, connecting the world of Isabella and Lorenzo with 'these same ledger-men' (XVIII,

⁴⁶ Darwin, 'Of the Secretion of Saliva, and of Tears, and of the Lacrymal Sack', Section XXIV, Vol. I in *Zoonomia*, p. 315.

⁴⁷ Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Decapitating Romance: Class, Fetish, and Ideology in Keats's *Isabella*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 49 (1994), pp. 321-338 (p. 334).

⁴⁸ Schulkins, 'The Economy of Romance in Keats's *Isabella*', p. 73.

⁴⁹ Kelvin Everest, '*Isabella* in the Market-Place: Keats and Feminism' in *Keats and History*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 107-126 (p. 123).

137).⁵⁰ Keats associates money with weeping, highlighting how the brothers' avarice leads directly to the physical and emotional suffering of their employees. From the 'weary hand' of the labourer that 'swelt[s] / In torched mine and noisy factories' (XIV, 107-108), the 'Ceylon diver' who goes 'all naked to the hungry shark' (XV, 113-114) with ears gushing blood (XV, 115), to the brothers' 'marble founts / [That] Gushed with more pride than a wretch's tears' (XVI, 121-122). As a 'servant of their trade designs' (XXI, 165), Lorenzo also operates within the brothers' economy of blood, sweat, and tears: 'How could they [the brothers] find out in Lorenzo's eye / A straying from his toil?' (XVIII, 139-140). It is the workings and movements of the eye that reveal Isabella and Lorenzo's secret relations to the brothers. For Richardson, the mannerisms, gestures, and expressions of the body are significant aspects of Keats's poetry. Richardson argues that in *Isabella*: 'the extrasemantic properties of speech can be as meaningful as the arbitrary symbols they convey';⁵¹ an idea that Richardson suggests has its roots in the science of Erasmus Darwin, F.G. Gall, Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis, and Charles Bell. Drawing upon the 1824 publication *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*,⁵² Richardson explains that for Bell:

Anatomy provides the 'grammar' of a universal language for the visual arts; 'expressions, attitudes, and movements of the human figure are the characters of this language,' which exerts a 'secret,' 'unconscious,' but 'constant influence on our opinions'.⁵³

For Bell, the gestures and expressions of the body are at once a shared, 'universal' language that is accessible for all to interpret and understand, as well as a deeply private interaction that has a 'secret' influence upon the observer that is obscure and difficult to read. Bell draws upon the visual arts to suggest that the expressions of the body are a hermeneutic language to be decoded by the observant eye of the onlooker, influencing the opinions and judgements we form of a person's mood, emotions, and attitudes. The eye is not only central for deciphering

⁵⁰ Everest and Schulkins also notice how Keats aligns the mercantile existence of the brothers with the dream world of Isabella and Lorenzo. Schulkins, for example, argues that: 'As Keats romanticises the brothers' materialism, he also associates material possessiveness with Isabella and Lorenzo's romantic love'. Schulkins, 'The Economy of Romance', p. 79. See also: Everest, '*Isabella* in the Market-Place', p. 113.

⁵¹ Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', p. 139.

⁵² Although the *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression* was published after Keats's death in 1824, Richardson suggests that Keats would have been cognisant of these ideas through his conversations and friendship with Haydon: 'Haydon [...] attended Bell's 1806 anatomy lectures for artists that became the foundation of his great work on the *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*'. Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', p. 119.

⁵³ Richardson, 'Introduction: Neural Romanticism', p. 34

the language of the body, but is also an important conveyor of meaning in its own right. Bell writes that: ‘The eye is the most lively feature in the countenance [...] In the eye we look for meaning, for human sentiment, for reproof’,⁵⁴ describing in close detail the anatomy and physiognomy of the orbicularis muscle that is active during weeping.⁵⁵ The eye is not only the instrument that reads, but also the object which is to be read, revealing and concealing the innermost thoughts and attitudes of the observer and the observed. It is this tension between the universality and privacy of the language of crying that Keats investigates in *Isabella*.

Through the weeping eye, Lorenzo and Isabella communicate in their own private language of bodily signs and expressions. Lorenzo remains sensitive to the changing expressions in Isabella’s face, suggesting that tears might replace a verbal proclamation of love by ‘speak[ing] love-laws’ (V, 39). Similarly, ‘Isabel’s quick eye’ (VII, 51) is ‘wed / To every symbol on his [Lorenzo’s] forehead’ (VII, 51-51), reading the signs of love in Lorenzo’s countenance before receiving a verbal declaration of affection from the ‘young palmer’ (I, 2). Such familiarity with and attentiveness to each other’s body language appears to highlight the intimacy of connection between Isabella and Lorenzo. And yet, it is by the ‘many signs’ (XXI, 161) of the body that the brother’s also notice and uncover the lovers’ secret behaviour: ‘How could they find out in Lorenzo’s eye / A straying from his toil?’ (XVIII, 139-140). Keats draws attention to the paradoxical ability of the eye to offer both clarity and enigma at this moment in the poem. While the brothers are able to identify the nature of Lorenzo’s body language, it is unclear how they have attached such meaning to the expressions of the eye. In their unknowability, tears resist certain interpretation, revealing more about what informs the subjective interpretations of the onlooker than the nature of the person who is weeping. The brothers understand Lorenzo’s body language in relation to his status as a servant within their employ; Lorenzo’s altered behaviour represents ‘A straying from [...] toil’ and a potential loss for their business. With ‘vision covetous and sly’ (XVIII, 141), the brothers’ interpretation of crying is motivated by their obsession with money: ‘The brethren, noted the continual shower / From her dead eyes [...] / [wondering] that such dower / Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside / By one marked out to be a Noble’s bride’ (LVII, 452-456). Within the brothers’ private economy, tears function as a sign that their potential to make a profit is under threat, becoming the means by which ‘the money-bags’ (XVIII, 142) gain a secret knowledge that allows them to protect and

⁵⁴ Charles Bell, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as Connected with the Fine Arts*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), p. 94.

⁵⁵ Bell, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*, p. 97.

increase their ‘red-lined accounts’ (XVI, 125). For Keats, it is not only the ‘grammar’ of anatomy that exerts a secret influence over the opinions of the observer, in the way that Bell proposes: it is also the mind and attitudes of the onlooker that influences how they read the signs of the human body.

Like Isabella’s brothers, the readers and writers of fiction are also implicated in the dubious ethical relationship between tears and money. Throughout his short life, Keats was plagued by economic worries. Beginning with a family dispute that left the Jennings and Keats estate locked up in Chancery, Keats’s finances remained consistently insecure. As Roe notes, the legal proceedings that tied up the estate left ‘Keats with intractable anxieties about money as well as an air of one who had great expectations’.⁵⁶ John, George, Tom, and Fanny all had £2000 each of their grandmother’s, Alice Jennings, estate owing to them. But unaware of how much their capital was worth or how to go about claiming for it, their only funds came from a trust set up for them by their grandparents, worth £800 each and controlled by Richard Abbey until they came of age. Such funds were insufficient for Keats, whose ‘reckless generosity’ in giving out loans to friends contributed to a lifestyle that was financially unstable.⁵⁷ Unlike the covetousness that characterises Isabella’s brothers, it was perhaps Keats’s altruism that was his greatest barrier to financial security. After a failed investment in a steamboat in Midwestern America drained George’s funds, for example, Keats allowed George to take a £440 cut of Tom’s estate to support his new family and life across the Atlantic, and was left with only £100 himself.⁵⁸ Such monetary selflessness led, in part, to the unpredictability of Keats’s income and a lack of funds that not only prevented him from marrying Fanny Brawne, but also forced Keats to think about poetry as a mercantile, rather than a solely imaginative and intellectual, venture.

Writing *Isabella* a year after undertaking his final medical duties at Guy’s Hospital,⁵⁹ the practicalities of how Keats was to make a successful career in poetry was at the forefront of his mind. As Andrew Franta writes: ‘it is not surprising that a poet like Keats, famously lacking the economic and educational resources of Wordsworth and Shelley, should feel a certain

⁵⁶ Roe, *John Keats*, p. 29. Roe notes that ‘as late as the 1880s Fanny Keats, aged eighty-three, was still trying to discover what had happened to the money in Chancery’, p. 29.

⁵⁷ Roe, *John Keats*, p. 134. By 1819, Keats was owed at least £200 from the loans he had handed out to his friends. Haydon alone owed Keats £30. Keats was reluctant to call such loans in until Brown prompted him to do so.

⁵⁸ After his death in December 1818, Tom’s estate again became embroiled in the family dispute that had tied up the Jennings/Keats capital in Chancery. Keats’s Aunt filed a bill against the Keats siblings that meant that they were unable to claim on their inheritance from Tom until the case was settled. See Roe, *John Keats*, pp. 327-328.

⁵⁹ Roe notes how it was in March 1817 that Keats conducted his last medical operation that involved opening a temporal artery. Roe, *John Keats*, p. 153.

anxiety about the reading public'.⁶⁰ Keats's attitude towards the public was ambivalent at the time he was completing *Isabella*. On the one hand, the need to write poetry that would appeal to popular taste was a financial necessity, leading Keats to take up Hazlitt's suggestion that: 'a modern translation of some of the serious tales in Boccaccio [...] as that of *Isabella* [...] could not fail to succeed in the present day'.⁶¹ And yet Keats's letters throughout this period repeatedly highlight his rejection of and even hatred for 'a Mawkish Popularity' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 267), which he suggests he 'cannot help looking upon as an Enemy, [...] [or] address without feelings of Hostility' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 266-267). While tears have the potential to represent the 'bitter-sweet' ('On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again', 8) emotional complexity and intensity of a Shakespearean drama like *King Lear*, for Keats, they also threaten to reinforce a superficial, popular sentimentality that is as unthinking as a 'barren dream' ('On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again', 12).⁶²

Such concern for the public's shallow engagement with the romance genre has its roots in the proliferation of sentimental novels and literature of sensibility that were published throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Keats's suggestion on 21st March 1818 that 'a romance [sic] is a fine thing notwithstanding the circulating libraries' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 253), alongside his affectionately mocking imitation of the gothic romance writer, 'the Damosel [Ann] Radcliffe' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 245), in a letter to Reynolds within the same month, shows Keats's simultaneous desire and reluctance to align himself with writers of romance. According to John Brewer, eighteenth-century sensibility initially indicated a 'capacity to feel and exert sympathy',⁶³ whose chief sign was 'spontaneous lachrymosity'.⁶⁴ Sentimental story-telling stimulated the sensibility of the reader, thereby affirming and developing their 'humanity and morality'.⁶⁵ As sentimental literature entered public taste,

⁶⁰ Andrew Franta, 'Keats and the Review Aesthetic', *Studies in Romanticism*, 38 (1999), pp. 343-364 (p. 344).

⁶¹ William Hazlitt, 'Lecture IV Dryden and Pope' in *Lectures on the English Poets*, 3rd edition, (London: J. Templeman), pp. 132-163 (p. 158). Keats attended Hazlitt's lecture on 3rd February 1818, before beginning the *Isabella* project at the beginning of March 1818. John Barnard explains that '*Isabella* was written for a proposed joint volume by Reynolds and Keats based on Boccaccio'; a volume that never came to fruition. *John Keats The Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard, p. 621

⁶² Amongst others, Helen Vendler and Marguerite de Waal write of Keats's complex engagement with and supposed rejection of the romance genre in Keats's 'King Lear' sonnet. Helen Vendler, 'John Keats. Perfecting the Sonnet' in *Coming of Age as a Poet* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 41-79; Marguerite de Waal, 'The Poetry of Dream and the Threat of Barrenness in Three Sonnets by John Keats', *English Academic Review*, 33 (2016), pp. 72-86.

⁶³ John Brewer, 'Sentiment and Sensibility' in *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. by James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 21-44 (p. 22).

⁶⁴ Brewer, 'Sentiment and Sensibility', p. 29.

⁶⁵ Brewer, 'Sentiment and Sensibility', p. 29.

however, it became a ‘fashionable indulgence’ for those of “‘wealth, luxury, indolence and intemperance’”.⁶⁶ Novels were printed in profusion by ‘what some critics called “novel manufacturers”’,⁶⁷ involving extensive commercialisation and increased commodification of writing, epitomised by the circulating library. As Brewer writes: ‘When sensibility became a part of fashion it was appropriated by the very thing it was supposed to stand against; when it was commodified its moral purpose was subordinated to profit’.⁶⁸ Sensibility threatened to become ‘an empty performance’ for writers and readers whose ‘false tears [...] [might] hide an “unfeeling heart”’.⁶⁹ In *Isabella*, Keats is mindful that his poem will be numbered among the many ‘mawkish’ romances of the literary marketplace, suggesting that tears occupy a status somewhere between the performed, hollow sentimentality of commercial romances, and the richly complex internal reality of man’s emotional existence:

Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
 Too much of pity after they are dead,
 Too many doleful stories do we see,
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be read (XII, 90-94).

Keats’s first digression in *Isabella* uses tears as a means by which to pull the reader outside of the narrative in order to reflect metapoetically upon the role of crying within the telling of romantic tales. While the opening stanzas of the poem draw attention to the ‘sad plight’ (IV, 25) of Isabella and Lorenzo’s ‘nightly weep[ing]’ (I, 8), stanza XII suggests that Keats’s poetic focus has also been on creating a ‘doleful’ story that seeks to elicit a particular emotional reaction from the reader so that it is also the reader’s tears that have been under investigation. As Susan Wolfson deftly argues:

suspensions of story-telling [in *Isabella*] are not displays of humorous narrative incompetence or wily satiric inversion; they are acts of scrutiny that yield critical vantage points on the codes of the ‘romance’ genre.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Brewer, ‘Sentiment and Sensibility’, p. 40.

⁶⁷ Brewer, ‘Sentiment and Sensibility’, p. 38.

⁶⁸ Brewer, ‘Sentiment and Sensibility’, pp. 39-40.

⁶⁹ Brewer, ‘Sentiment and Sensibility’, p. 40.

⁷⁰ Susan Wolfson, ‘Keats’s ‘Isabella’ and the ‘Digressions’ of Romance’, *Criticism*, 27 (1985), pp. 247-261 (p. 249).

Unlike Byron, who comically uses ‘digression [...] / [to] soliloquize beyond expression’ (*Don Juan*, III, 858-860),⁷¹ the voice of Keats’s narrator is serious in its critical disparagement of romance at this moment in the poem. As Keats began writing *Isabella* in March 1818, Byron anonymously published his own Italian romance in *ottava rima: Beppo*. Continually diverging from the poetic narrative, *Beppo*’s narrator unashamedly declares his desire to become a prolific, profiteering writer of ‘pretty poems never known to fail’ (*Beppo*, 51, 404).⁷² Byron satirises the readers of popular literature, drawing upon his own publication of Oriental tales, such as *The Giaour* (1813), *The Corsair* (1814), and *Lara* (1814), to suggest how ‘quickly’ (*Beppo*, 51, 405) and easily writers exploit public emotionality by ‘sell[ing] you, mixed with western Sentimentalism, / Some samples of the finest Orientalism’ (*Beppo*, 51, 407-408). In stanza 51, Byron maximises the digressive potential of *ottava rima* by comically stretching the final rhyming couplet to its limits. Employing a feminine rhyme of five syllables, Byron draws the reader’s attention away from what is happening in the poetic narrative and towards how that poetic narrative is written, showing off an effortless ability at creating complex rhymes, even as he denies having the ‘art of easy writing’ (*Beppo*, 50, 401). *Isabella*, on the other hand, moves away from the feminine rhymes associated with Leigh Hunt, and for which Keats’s earlier ‘cockney’ poetry was criticised,⁷³ to establish a directness of tone in the complete masculine rhymes of stanza XII. Whereas Byron performs the role of a sardonic narrator who mocks the readers of sentimental romances, Keats’s narrator intimates a sincere exploration of the genre that directly implicates both poets and readers in voyeuristically and unthinkingly indulging in the misery of others.

Wolfson argues, *Isabella* is ‘a “romance,” but only so at the expense of exposing and reforming the economy of pleasure implicated in the conventions, attitudes, and values the genre traditionally promotes’.⁷⁴ Keats complicates the reader’s experience of pleasure by making us think through and reflect upon the price of our delight and how it troublingly intersects with economics, thereby reclaiming romance’s literary value as a mental and not a financial

⁷¹ Lord Byron, ‘Don Juan’ in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 373-879.

⁷² Byron, ‘Beppo’ in *Major Works*, pp. 316-341.

⁷³ In the *Eclectic Review*’s September 1817 review of *Poems*, which Keats dedicated to Hunt, Keats is called ‘a very facetious rhymers. We have *Wallace* and *solace*, *tenderness* and *slenderness*, *burrs* and *sepulchres*, *favours* and *behaviours*, *livers* and *rivers*’. More famously, Keats would be ridiculed by John Gibson Lockhart in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* for founding ‘the Cockney school of versification’. *Keats The Critical Heritage*, ed. by G. M. Matthews (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1971), pp. 63-70 and pp. 97-110.

⁷⁴ Wolfson, ‘Keats’s ‘*Isabella*’ and the ‘Digressions’ of Romance’, p. 251.

enterprise. Drawing attention to ‘idle ears’ that take ‘pleasure in their [Isabella and Lorenzo’s] woe’ (XI, 88), Keats suggests that tears are not necessarily indicative of the sensitivity of the reader’s sympathetic capabilities. Instead, the anaphora of ‘too many’ and ‘too much’ in stanza XII not only points out the abundance of romantic fiction published within Keats’s lifetime, but also the excessive, hyperbolic emotional response of readers of ‘doleful stories’. Such a response verges on disingenuousness, as the tears produced by readers are disproportionate to the events that have caused them. If sympathy is predicated on an ability to enter into and understand the physical and emotional reality of the other, then Keats highlights the reader’s lack of understanding of the characters and narrative events that are under consideration by suggesting that our tears are ‘too many’. Weeping points out the idleness of the reader’s sympathetic imagination. *Isabella* suggests that the ‘tears’ (XII, 90), ‘sighs’ (XII, 91), and ‘pity’ (XII, 92) which make up the act of weeping carry a currency, functioning as a ‘fee’ given by the reader to the ‘lovers’ (XII, 90) of romantic tragedies, as if Keats were making Isabella and Lorenzo act out sorrow for profit. The emotional investment of the reader becomes a financial asset to the writer so that the economic success of poetic romance is dependent upon the writer making his or her audience cry. As Wolfson argues: ‘How different are the tellers and listeners of bright gold renditions of doleful stories from the merchandizing brethren, who cherish their gold, and continue to amass “rich-ored driftings” by exploiting human misery?’⁷⁵ Directing the reader to consider the poem’s ‘matter in bright gold’ (XII, 94), Keats encourages us to ‘look to the reality’ (*Letters: John Keats* II, 174) of poems like *Isabella* and to that which motivates the poet to write tearful tales.⁷⁶

Weeping Ghosts

The gothic genre, with its interest in extremes of passion and psychological disturbance, becomes one of the modes through which Keats investigates the pathological status of weeping in *Isabella*. As a genre that dominated the literary marketplace and that was almost synonymous with romance during Keats’s lifetime,⁷⁷ gothic fiction was frequently charged with containing the same facile and commercial entertainment that Keats rejects in stanza XII.⁷⁸ For Beth Lau,

⁷⁵ Wolfson, ‘Keats’s ‘Isabella’ and the ‘Digressions’ of Romance’, p. 256.

⁷⁶ Keats’s reluctance to publish *Isabella*, in part, stemmed from his belief that there were ‘very few [readers] who would look to the reality’ of the poem (*Letters: John Keats* II, 174).

⁷⁷ Jerrold Hogle tells us that the Gothic ‘exploded in its own way during the 1790s to the point where it gained 38 percent of the British fiction market by 1795’, highlighting how Ann Radcliffe labelled her novels as ‘romances’. Jerrold Hogle, ‘The Gothic-Romantic Relationship: Underground Histories in “The Eve of St. Agnes”’, *European Romantic Review*, 14 (2003), pp. 205-223 (p. 217) and (p. 207).

⁷⁸ Most famously, Coleridge’s anonymous review of Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* in the February 1797 *Critical Review* suggests that: ‘The horrible and the preternatural have [...] seized on popular taste [...]. Most powerful

Keats's 'Gothicisation' of Boccaccio echoes contemporary parodies of gothic romances by authors such as Jane Austen, whose *Northanger Abbey* was posthumously published in December 1817, only months before *Isabella*'s composition. Lau suggests that Austen's novel seeks to correct those tired gothic conventions whose purpose it was to stimulate the sighs and tears of young female readers unable to 'distinguish the land of fiction from reality'.⁷⁹ While a cultivated sensibility was desirable in readers, writers and critics were also aware that gothic romances might 'usher in the possibilities of melancholy, delirium and defeat',⁸⁰ exciting a dangerously pathological response from the nervous system.⁸¹ For Lau, the fragile sensitivity and delicate nerves that Austen mocks in the readers of gothic fiction becomes the 'cause [of] genuine, serious illness' in *Isabella*.⁸² Keats reclaims gothic images and tropes to explore the tragic realities and maladies of *Isabella*'s internal existence, introducing a ghost into the poetic narrative who does not initially provoke the tears and screams of the heroine or reader, but who is instead presented as a spectral figure that weeps:

It was a vision. — In the drowsy gloom,
The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
Lorenzo stood, and wept (XXXV, 273-275).

Keats draws out the psychological depth and complexity that the gothic has to offer at this moment in the poem, simultaneously playing up to and denying those scientists and gothic reviewers who sought to categorise nervous diseases which resulted from extreme passions. Throughout stanzas XXXV to XLI, Keats complicates Boccaccio's plot in *The Decameron* in which Lorenzo's ghost is straightforwardly presented as a dream from a 'trance or sleepe'.⁸³

stimulants, they can never be required except by the topor of an unawakened, or the languor of an exhausted appetite. [...] with how little expense of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured'. 'Review of Matthew G. Lewis *The Monk* (February, 1797)', *The Critical Review* (London: The Critical Review, 1797), pp. 194-200.

⁷⁹ Beth Lau, 'Madeline at Northanger Abbey: Keats's Anti Romances and Gothic Satire', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 84 (1985), pp. 30-50 (p. 30).

⁸⁰ John Mullan, 'Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians', *The Eighteenth Century*, 25 (1984), pp. 141-174 (p. 141). Coleridge's review of *The Monk* similarly points out the dangers of reading gothic fiction, suggesting that 'the Monk is a romance, which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale'. 'Review of Matthew G. Lewis *The Monk* (February, 1797)', pp. 194-200.

⁸¹ Robert Whytt, for example, suggests that: 'doleful or moving stories [...] occasion the most sudden and violent nervous symptoms. The strong impressions made in such cases on the brain and nerves, often throw the person into hysteric fits'. Whytt, *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders which have been commonly called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric* (Edinburgh: Printed for T. Becket, and P. Du Hondt, and J. Balfour, 1765), p. 212.

⁸² Lau, 'Madeline at Northanger Abbey', p. 42.

⁸³ Giovanni Boccaccio, 'The Fift Novell' in *The Decameron* (London, Isaac Iagaard, 1620), p. 160. It is this edition and translation of Boccaccio that Walter Jackson Bate identifies as Keats's source material for *Isabella*.

Keats makes it uncertain as to whether the reader is confronted with a spectral encounter between the lovers or if Lorenzo's ghost is a manifestation from Isabella's disordered psyche. Lorenzo is presented as a 'vision' (XXXV, 273); a 'pale shadow' (XXXVI, 281) from 'the drowsy gloom' (XXXV, 273) and 'the dull of midnight' (XXXV, 274) from which Isabella 'started up awake' (XLI, 328). Deprived of 'healthful midnight sleep' (XLI, 323), Isabella stares with aching eyelids (XLI, 327) into the 'atom darkness' (XLI, 322) so that Lorenzo's weeping spectre seems to come directly from the dream world of her unconscious imagination, rather than appearing as a ghost to which others could bear witness. In the same way that Isabella's wearied and unstable mind discerns shapes within a 'spangly gloom' (XLI, 326) that appears to 'froth up and boil' (XLI, 326), Keats also makes the reader search through the images of 'drowsy' darkness in lines 273-274 to ascertain the nature of Isabella's vision. By delaying the object of the sentence and the reader's encounter with Lorenzo's weeping ghost in lines 273-275, Keats creates a feeling of disorientation that reinforces the ghost's position as a hallucination from Isabella's unconscious. Such hallucinatory symptoms initially seem to be consistent with late eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth century medical accounts of nervous disorders. As a prominent eighteenth-century 'psychiatric doctor', professor of the theory of medicine at Edinburgh University, and first physician to George III in Scotland in 1761,⁸⁴ the works and ideas of Robert Whytt would have been familiar to Keats and widely disseminated throughout his medical training.⁸⁵ Whytt's seminal 1765 *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders which have been commonly called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysterical* defines hysteria and hypochondria as an excessive and 'uncommon delicacy or unnatural sensibility of the nerves',⁸⁶ listing 'fits of crying [...] disturbed sleep, frightful dreams, the night-mare [...] sadness, despair [...] [and] ridiculous fancies' as hysterical symptoms;⁸⁷ all of which characterise Isabella's behaviour towards the end of the poem. By suggesting that Lorenzo's ghost is a 'vision', Keats hints at Isabella's

Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 311 (note 9).

⁸⁴ Mullan, 'Hypochondria and Hysteria', pp. 143-144.

⁸⁵ Goellnicht notices how Keats's medical notebook closely echoes Whytt's *Observations*. Keats writes that: 'in diseases Medical Men guess, if they cannot ascertain a disease they call it nervous' (*John Keats Note Book*, 57). The opening page of the preface to Whytt's *Observations* also suggests that: 'physicians have bestowed the character of *nervous* on all those disorders whose nature and causes they were ignorant of'.

⁸⁶ Whytt, 'Preface' to *Observations*, p. iii. Mullan notes that: 'In the writings of eighteenth-century physicians, hypochondria, [was] generally regarded as the affliction of men, hysteria, as that of women'. Whytt dismissed outdated claims that hysteria was the product of a 'wandering womb', 'reject[ing] the description of "the hysterical" and "the hypochondriac disease" as "different diseases"', even as he notes that hysterical symptoms occur more frequently in the female sex. Mullan, 'Hypochondria and Hysteria', p. 153

⁸⁷ Whytt, *Observations*, pp. 99-100.

psychological instability, drawing upon medical accounts of nervous disorders to nuance his engagement with the gothic genre. Lorenzo's ghost does not simply provoke an extreme emotional response from Isabella, endangering the delicate sensitivity of Keats's heroine in the way that gothic reviewers proposed. Instead, Lorenzo's spectre can be understood as an apparition that stems from Isabella's supposed hysteria.

Despite encouraging the reader to identify Isabella's symptoms as hysterical, Keats repeatedly undermines our ability to subscribe to this diagnosis throughout these stanzas. Sceptical of those scientists who categorised many disparate symptoms as nervous, from 'lymphatic diabetes' to 'wind in the stomach',⁸⁸ Keats writes in his medical notebook that: 'in diseases Medical Men guess, if they cannot ascertain a disease they call it nervous' (*John Keats Note Book*, 57). This scepticism towards 'Medical Men' is also present in *Isabella*. Keats exposes the complexity of psychological illnesses and the inadequacy of those medical texts that attempted to explain them through an arbitrary list of physiological symptoms. Whereas tears are usually considered as evidence of nervous disorders, it is the materiality of Lorenzo's tears that destabilises his status as a 'ridiculous fancy' from Isabella's disturbed mind, affording him a physicality that counters his ephemeral nature as a 'pale shadow' (XXXVI, 281). Crying becomes the clue to Lorenzo's liminality as a ghostly figure that is simultaneously presented as real, supernatural, and imaginary:

[...] the forest tomb
 Had marred his glossy hair which once could shoot
 Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
 From his lorn voice, and past his loaméd ears
 Had made a miry channel for his tears (XXXV, 275-280).

Lorenzo is defined as supernatural by his status as a being from the 'tomb' (XXXV, 275) who: moans a 'ghostly under-song' (XXXVI, 287), identifies himself as a spirit (XL, 314), and who is able to communicate the events of his murder (XXXVII). Such communication of occurrences that are previously unknown to Isabella suggests Lorenzo's ghostly reality as an apparition separate from Isabella's dream world and who is able to inform her of what is

⁸⁸ Dawin, *Zoonomia*, vol. 2, p. 121; Whytt, *Observations*, p. 221.

happening in the grisly realities outside of her brothers' mansion. And yet Lorenzo's spectrality is also undercut by the unnerving tangibility of his tears, which create a path through the mud from the 'forest tomb' (XXXV, 275) that has dirtied his face. Paradoxically presented as a phantom figure who 'know[s] what was' and 'feel[s] full well what is' (XL, 313), Lorenzo occupies a bodily reality as a supernatural being who hears what is occurring around his grave (XXXIX) and who can secrete tears from a functioning anatomy. As Mark Sandy suggests, Lorenzo's ghost is not simply associated with the phantasmagoria of a highly fictionalised genre. Rather:

Keats's poetry depicts visionary states that point towards a haunting of idealised fictions by the reality they feign to elude. This poetic anxiety emerges in Keats's world of romance as a succession of hauntings.⁸⁹

While ghosts usually call attention to the fictional status of a narrative, Sandy suggests that Keats's hauntings are harbingers of the 'wormy circumstance' (XLIX, 385) of reality. The brutality of Lorenzo's murder inaugurates Isabella's entry into the grimness of an existence in which tears no longer partake in idealisations of lovers with 'glossy hair' (XXXV, 276) shooting 'lustre into the sun' (XXXV, 277), as they did in the love-sick 'nightly weep[ings]' (I, 8) of the opening stanzas. Instead, tears are distanced from 'the gentleness of old Romance' (XLIX, 387) to become mixed with the loam and soil of Lorenzo's 'yawning tomb' (XLIX, 386).

Yet the earthiness of the tears that clear a path through Lorenzo's muddied face is not only symbolic of Isabella's confrontation with the harsh facts and circumstances of tragic reality. Just as tears place Lorenzo's ghost within a physical reality on 'the skirts of human-nature' (XXXIX, 306), weeping also becomes a part of a visionary or spectral existence that is intangible and unknowable. Gothic scholars such as Jerold E. Hogle, David B. Morris, and Terry Castle have frequently understood the uncertain boundary between the real and imaginary in ghosts through Freud's theory of the uncanny.⁹⁰ For Freud, the uncanny is defined

⁸⁹ Mark Sandy, 'Dream Lovers and Tragic Romance: Negative Fictions in Keats's *Lamia*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Isabella*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 20 (2000), accessed via <<http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005955ar>> [accessed 5/7/2017].

⁹⁰ Freud suggests that 'an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary'. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin Group, 2003), pp. 121-162 (p. 150).

as something familiar that has been long hidden and therefore defamiliarised within the repressed spaces of the unconscious, which dangerously and unexpectedly reappears.⁹¹ Released from the buried spaces of the grave, Freud suggests that spirits and ghosts are ‘the acme of the uncanny’ as figures that are both dead and animate,⁹² thereby presenting phantoms as external manifestations of a psychic disturbance within the self in the same way as Romantic scientists such as Whytt. As Terry Castle suggests, for psychoanalysts: ‘Self and other are not properly distinguished; everything merges’.⁹³ Keats both anticipates and extends a Freudian understanding of ghosts, not only presenting Lorenzo as living and dead, but also incorporating weeping within a system of uncanny representation. Through ghosting Lorenzo’s tears, Keats highlights their ambiguous ontological status as translucent and yet tangible objects that are at once a part of the self as well as externalised or ‘othered’ from the self. If Gothic images are uncanny, as David B. Morris argues, familiar yet defamiliarised within the unconscious, then they also maintain a new relation to language. What lies outside of consciousness also lies outside of language for Morris so that gothic images and uncanny figures can only act as inexact substitutes for what cannot be represented directly: ‘in the system of the uncanny, a corpse [or a ghost] cannot represent death (as it might in allegorical texts) but only our inability to know what death is’.⁹⁴ By having Lorenzo’s ghost weep, Keats includes tears within the ‘drowsy ignorance’ (XXXIV, 265) of both Isabella and the reader’s confrontation with spectrality. Tears act as a physiological substitute for that which lies outside of language and cannot be directly represented or exposed; a spilling over of intimately familiar but troublingly unfamiliar emotions from an unconscious space which cannot be properly processed or understood by the conscious mind.

Grief and the Erotics of Melancholia

Despite Keats’s reluctance to diagnose Isabella, her endless lachrymosity positions her within a tradition of melancholy, even as Keats does not commit to a fully medicalised reading of her character. If tears represent that which lies outside of consciousness, then it is Isabella’s unceasing tears that reveal her inability to process the loss of Lorenzo, leading to the obsessive and ritualised behaviour that confirms her mental instability. Such weeping, in the closing

⁹¹ Freud, ‘The Uncanny’, p. 132.

⁹² Freud, ‘The Uncanny’, p. 148.

⁹³ Terry Castle, ‘The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*’ in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 120-139 (p. 127).

⁹⁴ David B. Morris, ‘Gothic Sublimity’, *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, 16 (1985), pp. 299-319 (p. 311).

stanzas of the poem, stands at an uncomfortable and uncertain boundary between grief and sexual desire. That tears can signal both pain and pleasure remains a well-established trait of human emotional behaviour and was a site of exploration for those Romantic scientists who were interested in the causes and effects of the passions. In the preface to *Observations*, for example, Whytt argues that:

we cannot explain why grief or joy should, by means of the nerves, excite a greater motion than usual in the vessels of the lachrymal glands; yet it is leading us to the truth, and advancing one step farther in our knowledge, to shew that the increased secretion of tears, occasioned by those passions of the mind proceeds from this cause.⁹⁵

While Whytt notices how ‘grief’ and ‘joy’ share the same effect of stimulating increased activity in the lachrymal gland and its vessels, he identifies these emotional states as distinct from one another through the use of the conjunction ‘or’. Like Whytt, Keats is also fascinated by the enigma of how an immaterial cause such as extreme passion can excite a bodily response. But rather than presenting pleasure and pain as separate emotional states, *Isabella*’s concluding stanzas are imbued with simultaneous experiences of these contradictory passions; tears are oxymoronically bound up with the pleasures of grieving:

She calmed its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye’s sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smearéd loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drenched away — and still she combed, and kept
Sighing all day — and still she kissed, and wept (LI, 403-408).

Isabella’s acts of devotion towards Lorenzo’s severed head at once resemble a mourner who is preparing the body of a loved one for burial, even as they are disturbingly reminiscent of ‘erotic necrophilia’,⁹⁶ as Louise Z. Smith writes. The careful attention to Lorenzo’s ‘wild hair’ (LI, 403), the organising and tidying of his eyelashes, and the dousing of his head in ‘divine liquids’ (LII, 411) initially bear a similarity to the ritualised actions performed by the bereaved. In the

⁹⁵ Whytt, ‘Preface’ to *Observations*, pp. vi-vii.

⁹⁶ Louise Z. Smith, ‘The Material Sublime: Keats and “Isabella”’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 13 (1974), pp. 299-311 (p. 310).

same way that certain cultures and faiths methodically clean and anoint the bodies of the dead,⁹⁷ coming to terms with their grief and loss by enacting sacred rites, Isabella ‘drench[es] away’ (LI, 407) the ‘loam’ (LI, 404) and graveyard filth from Lorenzo’s face with her tears, mimicking the ‘miry channel’ (XXXV, 280) created upon the ‘loaméd’ (XXXV, 279) face of Lorenzo’s weeping ghost. By making Isabella’s tears the central element that cleans and prepares Lorenzo’s head, Keats incorporates crying within a process of ritualisation. Such crying highlights the depth and extent of Isabella’s loss, adding pathos to the pain of her distress and signalling her desire for continued intimacy with Lorenzo. As Smith notes: ‘Lorenzo suggests that “one tear upon my heather-bloom / . . . shall comfort me within the tomb” (303-304); her spirit will greet his as any mourner's reaches “through the clayey soil” (355)’.⁹⁸ Surpassing Lorenzo’s request for ‘one tear’ (303), Isabella cries with excessive enthusiasm, or ‘a richer zest’ (XXXI, 246), so that weeping becomes the principal means through which she attempts to ‘comfort’ (XXXVIII, 304) and maintain a connection with the dead.

Yet it is this very eagerness to remain connected to Lorenzo that characterises Isabella’s mental deterioration, underlying stanza LI with an unsettling and ‘strong erotic charge’.⁹⁹ Stillinger argues that:

What is most Wordsworthian of all [in *Isabella*] is the interest in psychology that dominates the latter half of the poem. In focussing on Isabella’s progressive derangement, Keats was, whether he knew it or not, tracing “the primary laws of our nature”.¹⁰⁰

Keats’s interest in the psychological reality of men and women not only drew him to Wordsworth, as Stillinger suggests, but it also led him to anticipate a Freudian understanding of the psychology of grief. In ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, Freud considers mourning as a

⁹⁷ In Matthew 26: 7-12, for example, Jesus suggests that the anointing of his body is a sacred act by which the living honours him and prepares him for burial: ‘There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. / But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? / For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. / When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. / For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. / For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial’. <<http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>> [accessed 20/3/2017].

⁹⁸ Smith, ‘The Material Sublime’, p. 310.

⁹⁹ Everest: ‘A strong erotic charge enters the poem only in Isabella’s half-deranged and obsessive efforts to recover the corpse’. ‘Isabella in the Market-Place’, p. 121.

¹⁰⁰ Stillinger, ‘The “Reality” of *Isabella*’, p. 43.

conscious action and melancholia as an unconscious process, suggesting that both involve a turning away from reality. Within the process of mourning, ‘reality-testing’ shows that the loved-object no longer exists,¹⁰¹ even as the psyche opposes such reality, struggling to abandon this position so that there is ‘a turning away from reality [...] and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis’.¹⁰² During which, the libido detaches itself from the lost object by bringing up and working through ‘each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object’ in a process of hyper-cathexis;¹⁰³ a term that refers to an excessive concentration of mental energy upon one idea or object.¹⁰⁴ By recalling their memories of the dead, the bereaved can come to terms with and understand their loss, thereby regaining a healthful psychological state. The melancholic, however, cannot comprehend what it is that has been lost; the loss does not fit into a coherent narrative that the mind can consciously process. Melancholia becomes a pathologised instance of mourning in which object-cathexis persistently manifests its influence. The sufferer cannot work through their grief, instead unceasingly and obsessively returning to the lost object. It is this fixation that Freud describes as: ‘The melancholic’s erotic cathexis in regard to his/her object’ and that Keats anticipates in his depiction of Isabella’s fetishistic behaviour towards the basil plant and Lorenzo’s dismembered head.¹⁰⁵

Forgetting everything beside ‘her sweet Basil’ (LIII, 423), Isabella cries ‘amorously’ (LXII, 490) as her entire mental life is concentrated upon the loss of her lover. The rituals which Isabella conducts as she prepares the head for burial within its ‘garden-pot’ (LII, 414) do not signal a process of beneficial mourning, but instead are symptomatic of a melancholy that ‘linger[s]’ (LV, 432).¹⁰⁶ In the couplet of stanza LI, for example, the repetition of the phrase ‘and still’ alongside the rhyming of the verbs ‘kept’ and ‘wept’ suggest the persistent and compulsive nature of Isabella’s grieving. Keats’s diction in stanza LI highlights Isabella’s

¹⁰¹ Sigmund Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XIV, trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 2001), pp. 243-258 (p. 244).

¹⁰² Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, p. 244.

¹⁰³ Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, p. 245.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Hyper-Cathexis’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/90273?redirectedFrom=hyper-cathexis#eid1021644>> [accessed 10/08/2017].

¹⁰⁵ Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, p. 251.

¹⁰⁶ Critics such as Robert Gittings, Aileen Ward, and Jane Chambers have rightfully focussed on how Keats’s poetic engagement with melancholy can be traced to his reading of Robert Burton’s 1621 *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. While Ward notes that: ‘it appears that Keats first became acquainted with Burton when Brown loaned or gave him his copy in the middle of June 1819’, Keats was already seriously exploring melancholy before reading Burton in earlier poems such as *Isabella*. Aileen Ward, ‘Keats and Burton: A Reappraisal’, *Philological Quarterly*, 40 (1961), pp. 535-552 (p. 543).

entrapment and stagnation within a world of tears and melancholia. As Castellano argues: ‘erotic desire propels Isabella into the psychic realm of living death’; a state that lacks growth and causes Isabella ‘to wither’ (LVII, 449).¹⁰⁷ Leaving reality behind in a type of ‘hallucinatory wishful psychosis’,¹⁰⁸ Isabella does not fully register Lorenzo’s status as a dismembered corpse, showing no repulsion towards his severed head. Instead, she behaves towards Lorenzo as she did in the earlier stanzas, treating the head as if her lover were alive by repeatedly ‘sighing’ (LI, 408) over and ‘kissing’ (LI, 408) it. Michael Sider indicates: ‘[Isabella’s] insane conflation of the beautiful and the grotesque suggests her withdrawal from reality [...] The erotic grotesque turns out to be a mode of awareness viable only in the privacy of Isabella’s madness’.¹⁰⁹ Such ‘withdrawal from reality’ propels Isabella back into the realm of romance; an alternative existence that, as Kern suggests, ‘inherently and unavoidably constitute[es] a world elsewhere’.¹¹⁰ Keats returns to the language of romance to create a perverted blazon in stanza LI in which the ‘erotic cathexis’ and ‘grotesque’ lust that Isabella shows towards the ‘fast mouldering head’ (LIV, 430) becomes repellently evident in the gruesome anatomising of the features of Lorenzo’s face. Isabella pays careful and almost lustful attention to the individual body parts of the corpse, from Lorenzo’s ‘wild hair’ (LI, 403) to his ‘sepulchral’ (LI, 404) eyes and ‘fringed lash[es]’ (LI, 405), suggesting Isabella’s physical attraction to the rotting cadaver. As Michael O’Neill writes, this is a ‘simultaneously tender and dry-eyed depiction of Isabella’s fetishistic, deranged obsession with the pot of basil in which she hides Lorenzo’s skull’.¹¹¹ Isabella’s loss and melancholia do not straightforwardly arouse the reader’s sympathy. Unable to identify with a mourner who is besotted with a head that is decapitated and ‘vile with green and livid spot’ (LX, 475), the reader is ‘excluded from the privacy of Isabella’s madness’ and repulsed by the macabre erotic nature of her grief.¹¹²

The relationship between death, weeping, and Isabella’s impulse towards the sexual act is framed by Keats’s movement toward the elegy; a form that seeks to use poetry to work through grief by commemorating and thereby give new life to the dead. Keats draws upon the elegiac tradition in the final stanzas of the poem, not only by calling for ‘syllables of woe’ (LVI, 441) and for the ‘bronzéd lyre’ (LVI, 443) of poetry to ‘Sound mournfully’ (LVI, 445) for Lorenzo

¹⁰⁷ Castellano, ‘The Ethics of Negative Capability in Keats’s *Isabella*’, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, p. 244.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Sider, ‘*Isabella* and the Dialogism of Romance’, pp. 347-348.

¹¹⁰ Kern, ‘Keats and the Problems of Romance’, p. 174.

¹¹¹ Michael O’Neill, ‘Second-Generation Romantic Poets 2: Shelley and Keats’ in *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. by Michael O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 524-541 (p. 537).

¹¹² Sider, ‘*Isabella* and the Dialogism of Romance’, pp. 347-348.

and ‘Isabel [who] is soon to be / Among the dead’ (LVI, 446-447), but also through the crucial depiction of the basil plant which flourishes and is ‘ever fed’ (LIV, 425) by the tears of Isabella’s grief. This image resonates with the elegiac convention of ‘the myth of the vegetation deity, particularly the sexual elements of such myths, and their relation to the mourner’.¹¹³ Isabella’s weeping is paradoxically fraught with morbid sexual tension as an act of fertility that sprouts new life from the remains of the dead:¹¹⁴

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut from view (LIV, 425-430).

Exploring the psychological implications of death, grief, and insanity in the poem, Michael Lagory argues that ‘none of Keats’s major narratives are more decided in meaning and symbolism’ than *Isabella*.¹¹⁵ By the end of the poetic narrative, Keats’s symbolism not only highlights the phallic connotations of a ‘thick’ (LIV, 426) vegetable growth that gradually swells and enlarges due to the attention of a sighing and weeping maid.¹¹⁶ The basil plant is also used as a metapoetic symbol by which Keats positions himself alongside the works of poets and elegists such as Boccaccio and Milton.¹¹⁷ Keats inherits the poetic self-consciousness that is implicit in the elegy as an ‘aggregative form’ in which utilising the voices of dead poets, or one’s poetic predecessors, and ‘the challenging of tradition [...] is itself traditional practice’.¹¹⁸ As a key influence on Keats’s poetry, Milton’s treatment of the elegy in *Lycidas* is central to understanding *Isabella*’s engagement with tears. In the opening lines of *Lycidas*, for

¹¹³ Michael Hurley and Michael O’Neill, ‘Elegy’ in *Poetic Form An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 100-119 (p. 101).

¹¹⁴ Michael Lagory also explores the vegetable symbolism of Keats’s depiction of the basil plant, noticing how Keats ‘associates Lorenzo’s symbolic rebirth with plant life, as in the striking oxymoron “the kernel of the grave” (383)’. Michael Lagory, ‘Wormy Circumstance: Symbolism in Keats’s *Isabella*’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 34 (1995), pp. 321-342 (p. 330).

¹¹⁵ Lagory, ‘Wormy Circumstance’, p. 341.

¹¹⁶ Stacey McDowell also points out that in herbal mythology the basil plant is considered ‘a token of love and a harbinger of insanity’. Stacey McDowell, ‘Grotesque Organicism in Keats’s *Isabella*; Or, *the Pot of Basil*’, *Keats-Shelley Review*, 24 (2010), pp. 22-28 (p. 26).

¹¹⁷ Susan Wolfson also argues for *Isabella*’s status as a ‘meta romance’. Susan Wolfson, *The Questioning Presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the Interrogative Mode in Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 285.

¹¹⁸ Hurley and O’Neill, ‘Elegy’, p. 112.

example, the speaker suggests that the dead ‘must not float upon his wat’ry bier / Unwept, [...] / Without the meed of some melodious tear’ (*Lycidas*, 12-14). For Milton, the elegy functions as a poetic act of weeping, a ‘melodious tear’ that enables the bereaved to honour the dead and thereby preserve their life and memory. Crying, in *Lycidas*, allows the speaker to work through his suffering and towards an existence in which he ‘Weep[s] no more’ (*Lycidas*, 165).¹¹⁹ Critics, such as Hurley and O’Neill, argue that this move ‘from grief to consolation’ is a defining characteristic of the elegy,¹²⁰ suggesting that poetry in which suffering is not alleviated is more accurately described as elegiac. Wishing to grow beyond his forebears and produce poetry that is ‘more balmy than its peers’ (LIV, 427), Keats creates a poetic narrative in which weeping is both regenerative and degenerative, occupying a status somewhere between the elegy and the elegiac. *Isabella* is a poem in which unceasing tears, unrelieved grief, and ‘human fears’ (LIV, 429) become the very means by which herbal, or poetic, life is ‘Nurtured’ (LIV, 429): ‘From mouth to mouth through all the country passed: / Still is the burthen sung — “O cruelty, / To steal my basil-pot away from me!”’ (LXIII, 503-504). The unresolved grief that characterises *Isabella*’s behaviour not only leads to her tragically premature death, but it also inspires the creation and recreation of new poetry so that the unending tears that typify her story are passed from ‘mouth to mouth’ to live on posthumously through the pens of poets such as Boccaccio and Keats.

‘Thin Tears’?

Isabella is a poem fascinated by the liminality of tears as phenomena that sit on the boundary between: the pain of ‘sick longing’ (III, 23) and ‘The little sweet’ (XIII, 98) of desire; the ostensible anatomical certainty of medicine and the fantastical, ‘other-worldly’ enigma of romance; the ‘perfuméd leafits’ (LIV, 432) of new life and the ‘quick Winter’ (LVII, 450) of decay; and the rich psychological complexity of ‘Spirits in grief’ (LV, 437) and the ‘barren tragedy tears’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 186) of a popular, consumer-based audience. *Isabella* represents Keats’s interest in the space between certain emotional and affective states of being and it is the ‘thin tears’ (LIV, 425) of the closing stanzas that embody such liminalities. The thinness that initially appears to describe the quantity of tears *Isabella* is able to produce, suggests her weakening and deteriorating physical state, highlighting how, as if ‘by magic

¹¹⁹ John Milton, ‘Lycidas’ in *The Norton Anthology English Literature The Sixteenth Century and The Early Seventeenth Century*, Vol. B, Ninth Edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), p. 1918-1923.

¹²⁰ Hurley and O’Neill, ‘Elegy’, p. 101. Drawing upon Freud, Hurley and O’Neill also align the elegy with mourning and the elegiac with melancholia.

touch' (LVIII, 459), the basil plant is able to flourish under the relatively little amount of nourishment it receives. Such withering away 'Of youth and beauty' (LVII, 455) draws attention to the emotional depth of Isabella's condition, suggesting the power of her mental life over her physical existence, and illustrating how even 'thin tears' can affect significant change. And yet, by describing Isabella's tears as 'thin', Keats recalls the 'Too many tears' (XII, 90) and 'idle ears' (XI, 88) of the reader which are attacked in the poem's opening stanzas. Despite the extent of Isabella's loss and the complexity of her emotional state, *Isabella* is haunted by an anxiety that the 'thin' or superficial tears of disengaged readers have the ability to reduce such tragedy to a catchy epigram: "'O cruelty, / To steal my basil-pot away from me!'" (LXIII, 503-504).

Yet, it is this very tension, between the superficiality and depth of tears, which demonstrates the scope of Keats's exploration of weeping. In the same way that the basil plant thrives in spite of insubstantial sustenance, Keats suggests that even 'barren tragedy tears' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 186) carry a potential meaning for those writers and readers who are willing to look deeper. It is in his 13th March 1818 letter to Reynolds that Keats adroitly articulates this idea:

I am sometimes so very sceptical as to think Poetry itself a mere Jack a lantern to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance — As Tradesmen say every thing [sic] is worth what it will fetch, so probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer [...] Things real — things semireal — and no things — Things real — such as existences of Sun Moon & Stars and passages of Shakespeare — Things semireal such as Love, the Clouds &c which require a greeting of the Spirit to make them wholly exist — and Nothings which are made Great and dignified by an ardent pursuit (*Letters: John Keats* I, 242-243).

Keats suggests that poetry can be diminished to the facile entertainment of a Jack o lantern; to the empty illusions of popular romance, for those readers and booksellers who, like Isabella's brothers, only find worth in the monetary richness of 'red-lined accounts' (XVI, 125) and tangible phenomena, such as the 'sun Moon & Stars'. But for Keats, 'value may be conferred as well as discovered',¹²¹ as O'Neill writes, so that even 'Nothings' which lie outside of

¹²¹ Michael O'Neill, 'Lamia: "Things real — Things Semi real — and No things"' in *The Challenge of Keats: Bicentenary Essays 1795-1995*, ed. by Allan C. Christensen et. al (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 125-144 (p. 128).

empirical existence can take on meaning for those who are willing to think deeply. In *Isabella*, the intellectual and literary value of tears moves beyond their physiological status, towards that which is unobservable through the microscopes of medical men and accessible only through the 'mental pursuit' of the reader's imagination. Whereas in *The Fall of Hyperion* the reader is asked to judge whether Keats is a poet of rich imagination or a fanatic of 'sable charm / And dumb enchantment' (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 10-11), in *Isabella* it is the reader who is brought to task. Keats questions whether the reader is capable of reading tears with the detail and careful attention required for objects of such emotional and physiological complexity. *Isabella* is only 'a weak sided poem' with a 'simplicity of knowledge' for those readers who are unwilling to 'look to the reality' of romance (*Letters: John Keats* I, 174). Through tears, Keats challenges his reader to attempt the 'ardent pursuit' for meaning.

Chapter Two: ‘[H]orrors, Portion’d to a Giant Nerve’: The Pain of Saturn’s ‘Soul-Making’ in *Hyperion*: A Fragment

In *Hyperion*, Keats continues to focus on how selfhood is affected and shaped by the trials and torments of physical, mental, and emotional pain; an idea elaborated upon in Keats’s famous ‘vale of soul-making’ letter to George and Georgiana Keats in April 1819.¹ In this letter, Keats writes that ‘a World of Pains and troubles is [necessary] to school an Intelligence and make it a soul. A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! [...] the Heart [is] a Hornbook’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 102-103). It is through the figure of Saturn that Keats establishes and tests the notion that selfhood is dependent upon and intimately bound up with suffering. Saturn becomes the central character through which Keats explores the problems of pain, identity, and progress in *Hyperion*. Whereas pain or ‘horrors, portion’d to a giant nerve’ (*Hyperion*, I, 175) precipitates a change in both Apollo and Hyperion’s identities, it is a change in identity that causes Saturn’s ‘aspen-malady’ (I, 94) and the distress of the Titans. Saturn’s torment stems from his loss of divine power whereby he moves from the unthinking state of ‘peace and slumberous calm’ (II, 335) to the mortal, bodily anguish of ‘big hearts / Heaving in pain’ (II, 26-27). Hermione de Almeida reads Saturn’s limited understanding of power and the Titans’ dethronement as symptomatic of disease, arguing that Saturn’s ‘vision of “ripe progress” as the repossession of heaven and the impossible return of extinct being, are nothing but diagnostic signs yet to be read of newly revealed illness’.² Yet de Almeida only considers progress within the limitations of celestial power, failing to recognise the implications of pain upon the issues of selfhood and personal growth. Michael E. Holstein writes: ‘the Titans begin to theorise, starting from the particular, concrete reality of pain [...] to conceptual thinking’.³ The experience of mortal pain elevates the Titans’ thoughts by prompting a philosophical discussion, preventing their dethronement from straightforwardly representing a devolution or regression. For one to undergo ‘alterations and perfectionings’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 103), the self requires degradation to the level of bodily pain in *Hyperion*. As Emily Rohrbach and Emily Sun argue:

¹ April 1819 was the month in which Keats abandoned his first attempt at the *Hyperion* project.

² De Almeida, ‘Saturn’s Query of Force’ in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, pp. 273-285 (p. 274).

³ Michael E. Holstein, ‘Keats: The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 36 (1987), pp. 32-49 (pp. 45-46).

As hornbook, the human heart is not just the object to be read but at the same time that which teaches to read. [...] To acquire an identity, for Keats, is to be a reader oriented by affective experience.⁴

Keats's assertion that identity is established and developed through the heart's encounter with pain is predicated on how man must simultaneously endure bodily or felt suffering even as he abstracts or dissociates himself from those experiences. Man must both feel and analyse such experiences so as to read into and understand their meaning and significance. Keats demands that readers of his poetry are also 'oriented by affective experience' so that we do not simply observe Saturn's pain from an abstract distance, but feel in sympathy with the Titan through acts of imagination that produce vicarious experiences of suffering. C. S Rousseau argues that: 'Chekhov was both physician and patient, observer and observed' who mediated 'between the so-called "objective" gaze of the doctor and the anguish of the patient'.⁵ It is this dual perspective of patient and physician, of feeling at the level of the body as we speculate and consider at the level of the mind, that Keats asks the reader to adopt in *Hyperion*. To bear bodily anguish with dissociation and calm dispassion becomes the hypothesis tested and experimented with in the poem, as Keats explores what it means to objectify pain when you are the individual subjected to that pain. In *Hyperion*, mortal pain becomes the trial required to propel the sufferer into a deeper level of understanding, even as the benefits of personal growth and knowledge that one obtains become the cause of fresh anguish.

Pain and 'Abstract Images'

For Keats, sympathising with the pain of another promises to be a means by which one might simultaneously undergo a felt experience of suffering while paradoxically remaining physically abstracted or dissociated from that experience. It was during the latter months of 1818 that Keats began thinking about and working on *Hyperion*, a period in which he was also nursing his terminally ill brother Tom through tuberculosis. Divided between his duties as a nurse or medic who considered and eased the pains of the body in an objectively medical way, as well as a brother who provided the comfort of fraternal affection and who was also emotionally affected by the sufferings of a close companion, Keats was profoundly aware of what it meant

⁴ Emily Rohrbach and Emily Sun, 'Reading Keats, Thinking Politics: An Introduction', *Studies in Romanticism*, 50 (2011), pp. 229-237 (pp. 233-234).

⁵ C. S Rousseau, 'Literature and Medicine: Towards a Simultaneity of Theory and Practice', *Literature and Medicine*, 5 (1986), pp. 152-181 (p. 173).

to be simultaneously close to and distanced from the physical pains of the body at this point in his poetic career:

[Tom's] identity presses upon me so all day that I am obliged to go out — and although I intended to have given some time to study alone I am obliged to write, and plunge into abstract images to ease myself of his countenance his voice and feebleness — so that I live now in a continual fever — it must be poisonous to life although I feel well (*Letter: John Keats I*, 369).

Written on 20th September 1818, Keats's letter to Dilke reveals how Tom's illness directly influenced and affected his writing. Keats's letter demonstrates how sympathetic identification with the pain of another can be the source of suffering for oneself, wherein the act of witnessing the anguish and 'feebleness' of a 'countenance' and 'voice' in pain is the cause of a constant 'fever' that Keats is 'obliged' 'to ease' or relieve himself of through the act of writing. It is in *A Theory of Moral Sentiment*, a seminal text on sympathy during Keats's lifetime, that Adam Smith articulates a theory of sympathetic identification that Keats draws upon in his letter. Smith argues:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his [the sufferer's] situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body and become in some measure him, and thence form some idea of his sensations.⁶

For Smith, sympathetic identification is predicated on an ability to forfeit one's identity and immediate bodily circumstances to undergo an imagined experience of suffering that is felt through our own physiological sensations. As James Chandler writes: 'To imagine one's self in another's case requires both an act of disembodiment and (at the same time) a virtual reembodyment' for Smith.⁷ Sympathetic identification becomes a curiously disembodied or abstracted state that is induced through the power of the imagination to take on the vividness of a 'virtual' bodily reality. Sympathy enables Keats to embody the feverous symptoms of a consumptive even as he remains distanced from that experience of pain, just as in the letter to Dilke Keats suggests he 'feel[s] well' while he considers himself to be in the throes of an

⁶ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 2-3.

⁷ James Chandler, 'Romanticism' in *An Archaeology of Sympathy* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 265-298 (p. 272).

unceasing or ‘continual fever’. In *Hyperion*, it is also the imagined and anticipated ‘horrors, portion’d to a giant nerve, / [That] oft made Hyperion ache’ (I, 175-176); mental or imagined horrors frequently come to play upon the nerves in Keats’s writing.

For Keats, the imagination is not only able to implicate the body in a physiological experience of suffering, but is also capable of distancing the mind from the pains of concrete reality. It was within two days of penning his letter to Dilke that Keats also wrote to Reynolds about ‘the feverous relief of poetry’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 370) in which he explains how he has relapsed ‘into those abstractions which are my only life’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 370). In the letters to Dilke and Reynolds Keats engages with the contradictory meanings of the word ‘abstract’, a term that can be used as a verb to denote a process of physical removal, withdrawal or separation,⁸ as well as a noun that defines something that exists conceptually ‘in thought or as an idea [...] [without] having a physical or concrete existence’.⁹ To move outwards and escape the confines of the sick room not only requires Keats ‘to go out’ and physically remove himself from an oppressive place, but also, paradoxically, to retreat inwards and focus on conceptual or imagined ‘abstract images’ that do not exist immediately in the external world. It is this dynamic of distance and proximity, of movement inwards and outwards, that Keats comes to grapple with in *Hyperion* and is contained within the oxymoronic term ‘abstract images’ in the letter to Dilke. The insubstantiality denoted by the adjective ‘abstract’ is countered by the concept of ‘images’ which implies something that is far more tangible and has ‘A visible appearance; [or the] manifestation of a figure’.¹⁰ By indicating that poetic ‘abstractions’ become his ‘only life’, Keats suggests that the imaginings of the mind’s eye can obtain such vividness that it takes on a substantial reality that distances him from the pains and horrors of his immediate physical surroundings. While John T. Ogden suggests of *The Prelude* that ‘Distance serves Wordsworth as a principal means through which imagination exercises its power’,¹¹ Keats reverses this so that it is through exercising the powers of the imagination that he is able to gain psychical distance and remove himself from the pain of sympathetically identifying with Tom’s suffering.

⁸ ‘Abstract, v’, *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/759?rskey=zExTxx&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 7/12/2015].

⁹ ‘Abstract adj. and n’, *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/758?rskey=zExTxx&result=1#firstMatch>> [accessed 7/12/2015].

¹⁰ ‘Images’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/91618?rskey=vLxtn7&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 28/12/2015].

¹¹ John T. Ogden, ‘The Power of Distance in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*’, *PMLA*, 88 (1973), pp. 246-259 (p. 246).

The letters to Dilke and Reynolds propose that poetic language has a self-medicating potential to provide ‘relief’ or ‘Give consolation in this woe extreme’ (II, 242), an idea that comes to be explored in *Hyperion*. Yet they also reveal an anxiety that writing does not necessarily allow one ‘to study’ or think through the issue of pain; Keats’s letters are aware that poetry might both abstract and distract the mind so that we no longer feel or engage directly with the experiences of the sufferer. The poetic task for Keats is to establish a distance that prevents the reader from over-identifying with suffering without completely removing us from an understanding and engagement with the problem of pain. Keats attempts to achieve this by pushing the limits of poetic language in *Hyperion* so that we are exposed to vivid and visceral depictions of wounded and bleeding bodies that are ‘horribly convulsed / With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse’ (II, 27-28), as well as removed from the horrifying reality of bodily suffering through the beauty of poetic form. Keats creates one of the only half-rhymes in the blank verse of the poem through the words ‘convulsed’ and ‘pulse’ in these lines, thereby drawing our attention back to the self-conscious artifice of his expression and setting this image of physical torment at the distance of poetic fiction. While half-rhyme appears to remove us from the Titans’ pain, Keats also uses the imperfect resonance of these rhyme words to promise an aural harmony that is not fully delivered. The horror and dissonance of such an intense image of bodily suffering seems to bleed or boil over into the poetry itself so that the aural beauty of the language is pushed to the point of cracking, thereby revealing the intensity of the Titans’ suffering.

‘Far Sunken’ Saturn

The tension between distance and proximity is established from the opening verse-paragraph of *Hyperion*. Keats manipulates the gaze of the reader so that we are both spatially abstracted from the suffering of Saturn as well as placed at the centre of the Titans’ ‘cruel pain’ (I, 44). In the first lines of the poem, distance prevents the reader from sympathising with Saturn’s suffering by restricting us from gaining a full insight into the nature and experience of his torment. While Keats’s letters propose that for man to obtain enlightenment and develop from ‘an *Intelligence*’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 102) into a soul, the ‘heart must feel and suffer’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 102), in *Hyperion* the reader is abstracted before we are given the opportunity to feel or share in Saturn’s pain. The reader is only able to glean a sense of Saturn’s misery through paying close attention to textual details:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale

Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
 Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
 Still as the silence round about his lair;
 Forest on forest hung about his head
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there (I, 1-7).

Saturn is initially positioned 'Deep' (I, 1) down and 'Far sunken' (I, 2) below the reader so that it seems as if we are gazing upon the scene from the vantage point of the forest that hangs above his 'bow'd head' (I, 20). Keats constructs a lengthy opening sentence in which two subordinate clauses in the third line are separated by a caesura that works deliberately to delay our introduction to Saturn. An initial image of Saturn is buried within the textual space of the opening stanza, distanced from the first line so that it is not until line 4 that he is named as the central figure for our consideration. In Keats's revision of these lines in *The Fall of Hyperion*, the distance between Saturn and the reader is even more exaggerated. The reader looks down upon the poet speaker, who is positioned next to Moneta '(Like a stunt bramble by a solemn Pine) / Deep in the shady sadness of a vale' (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 293-294), who in turn looks 'beneath the gloomy boughs' (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 297) upon Saturn.¹² The revision of these lines shows Keats going to even greater lengths to separate the reader from Saturn, using the poet speaker as a mediatory figure who feels and 'see[s] as a God sees' (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 304) in our stead. Critics such as Michael O'Neill have commented on the 'statuesque evocation' of Saturn in the poems.¹³ But Keats's simile in the fourth line of *Hyperion* does not draw out the 'epic proportions of the Titan' at this point in the poem,¹⁴ instead aligning him with the comparatively modest and small dimensions of 'a stone' (I, 4). Although Keats hints at Saturn's 'statuesque' nature by depicting him in the materials used for sculpting, the use of the indefinite article means that the reader does not necessarily consider Saturn in the terms of a large 'mass of rock',¹⁵ but as a small and fragmented 'piece of rock

¹² The observation of pain becomes the focus of chapter three on *The Eve of St Agnes* and *The Fall of Hyperion* on pp. 102-137.

¹³ Michael O'Neill, 'Writing and History in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*: Keats' in *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, pp. 209- 234 (p. 224).

¹⁴ Alan Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain' in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, p. 136.

¹⁵ 'Stone', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/190787?rkey=4kEtoF&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 17/10/2015].

[...] of a small or moderate size'.¹⁶ The god's diminutive appearance is not an accurate reflection of his size in the opening stanza, but instead it is the consequence of a physical gap between Saturn and the eye of the reader. Whereas Ogden draws on *The Prelude* to argue that for Wordsworth, both the reader and the poet can see 'further into man by seeing him from a distance',¹⁷ Keats uses spatial distance to draw attention to the reader's inability to understand Saturn's physical experiences, relate to his circumstances, or even comprehend his sensory impressions. The vale within which Saturn is placed is described as oppressively 'still' (I, 5), silent (I, 5), and suffocatingly airless (I, 7). Yet the first six lines of the poem are loaded with sibilance and fricative alliteration that contradicts this image by creating the impression of sound and movement; a tension that remains unchanged in *The Fall of Hyperion*. The repetition of the unvoiced consonants in sibilant phrases such as 'shady sadness' and 'Still as the silence' and the repeated fricative conceit 'far from' and 'forest on forest', make audible the movement of breath at the level of the spoken word. The eyes and ears of the reader are also pulled towards the only rhyme sounds in the opening passage. The word 'lair' in line 5 creates both an end rhyme and an internal rhyme in line 7 with the words 'air' and 'there'; Keats's rhyme is ironically dependent on the vowel sound 'air' which is contained within each rhyme word. Susan J. Wolfson's sense that 'choices of form and the way it is managed often signify as much as, and as part of, words themselves' can be extended.¹⁸ For Keats, semantic meaning works in tension with formal signification and the sensory impressions of the spoken word in the opening of the poem, thereby drawing attention to the gap between our experience as readers and Saturn's experience as a fallen God. The reader cannot gain insight or knowledge through experiences of pain because we are not aware of Saturn's physical sensations.

Milton and Wordsworth

Spatial abstraction prevents the reader from identifying with Saturn's personal experiences and physical sensations, even as it provides us with a larger frame of reference in which to contextualise his misery and comprehend its cause. Keats encourages us to consider Saturn in relation to his surroundings and not just as a figure in isolation. Although Saturn is ostensibly depicted in sympathy with his environment as a still and silent figure who is comparable to 'the

¹⁶ 'Stone', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/190787?rskey=4kEtoF&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 17/10/2015].

¹⁷ Ogden, 'The Power of Distance in Wordsworth's Prelude', p. 258.

¹⁸ Wolfson, 'Formal Intelligence Formalism, Romanticism, and Formalist Criticism' in *Formal Charges*, pp. 1-30 (p. 3).

silence round his lair' (I, 5), he is also presented as a character whose 'fallen divinity' (I, 12) is at odds with the landscape, casting an unnatural 'shade' (I, 13) that continues to 'spread' (I, 13), contaminate, and 'deaden more' (I, 12) his earthly surroundings. Distance allows the reader to notice a problematic relationship between Saturn and the natural landscape, drawing attention to a split in his identity: he is both a figure that has 'fallen' to the mortalising levels of the earth, as well as a 'divinity' who is accustomed to 'the fiery noon, and eve's one star' (I, 3). Saturn's status as a fallen deity appears to establish an overt parallel with Milton's Satan as figures who share semi-homophonic names and who both experience a physical and metaphorical fall from the heights of heaven at the hands of superior deities. Paul Sherwin argues that these similarities are 'superficial resemblances' that are used by Keats as a point of departure.¹⁹ What distinguishes Keats's depiction of Saturn from Milton's portrayal of Satan is the ways in which the two fallen deities respond to their suffering and loss of power. O'Neill and Hurley observe that epic poetry traditionally 'involves a sense of struggle and outcome' and a 'sense of task'.²⁰ The epic hero goes on a physical or personal journey, triumphing over adversity and working through their pain to achieve a state of progression or enlightenment. Unlike Milton's Satan, Saturn does not initially fit within this epic structure but is characterised by his lack of movement or progression, sitting quietly and passively suffering. In Book II of *Paradise Lost*, Satan actively claims hell as his 'home, [...] [to] ease / The present misery' (*Paradise Lost*, II, 457-458) of the fallen angels,²¹ aggressively adapting the pains and torments of a hell in which he was meant to suffer to his own maleficent ends. In contrast, Saturn inertly and listlessly dwells within a landscape from which he remains estranged, desperately 'list'ning to the Earth / His ancient mother, for [...] comfort' (I, 20-21) that he does not receive and cannot create for himself: "But can I not create? / Cannot I form?" (I, 141-142). Sherwin observes that Keats simultaneously engages with the poetic voices of Milton and Wordsworth in *Hyperion*, yet his suggestion that 'Keats sets out to subsume his two most troublesome precursors [Milton and Wordsworth] by combining the strengths of both' can be refined.²² The opening lines of *Hyperion* do not seek to 'subsume' or absorb the figures of Milton and

¹⁹ Paul Sherwin, 'Dying into Life: Keats's Struggle with Milton in Hyperion', *PMLA*, 93 (1978), pp. 383-395 (p. 390).

²⁰ Michael D. Hurley and Michael O'Neill, 'Epic' in *Poetic Form An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 120-144 (p. 120).

²¹ John Milton, 'Paradise Lost' in *The Norton Anthology English Literature The Sixteenth Century and The Early Seventeenth Century*, Vol. B, Ninth Edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), pp. 1831-2055.

²² Sherwin, 'Dying into Life: Keats's Struggle with Milton in Hyperion', p. 385.

Wordsworth, but interweave and complicate their poetic voices to renovate established traditions of epic poetry.

Written months before Keats began *Hyperion*, Keats's 3rd May 1818 letter to Reynolds compares Wordsworth and Milton's poetic projects. Keats not only questions whether Milton has 'less anxiety for Humanity' by suggesting that he 'did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 282), but also asks 'whether Wordsworth has in truth epic passion' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 278) in the same way as Milton. As Paul A. Cantor claims, Wordsworth 'sought to make the epic into a vehicle of [...] self-expression'.²³ Keats uses Wordsworth's deeply self-reflective 'Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' to reduce Miltonic heroism to an intimately human level even as he elevates Saturn's new-found mortality by making it the central subject of his epic poem.²⁴ Milton adheres to the traditional epic 'convention of starting in medias res',²⁵ wherein Satan is 'Hurl'd headlong flaming from the Ethereal Sky' (*Paradise Lost*, I, 45).²⁶ Vincent Newey argues that in *Hyperion* the 'sonnet-stanza [also] situates us *in medias res*',²⁷ yet *Hyperion* is staged outside of the epic action and away 'from the fiery noon' (I, 2) as a poem that 'overlooks Saturn's actual descent, presenting only its paralyzing aftershock' as Sherwin writes.²⁸ The silence and stillness in the opening tableau establishes a reflective and deeply private setting that is more akin to the Wordsworthian ode than the Miltonic epic. 'Keats writes self-consciously, yet powerfully, against the grain' of the Miltonic epic by subverting a Wordsworthian understanding of man's conflicted origins as set out in the 'Immortality Ode'.²⁹ Whereas Wordsworth's speaker identifies with 'God, who is our home' as well as considering man to be the 'foster-child' ('Immortality Ode', 65 and 82) of earth,³⁰ Saturn is instead alienated from 'The sunshine [of] a glorious birth' ('Immortality Ode', 16) or *Hyperion*'s 'fiery noon' while remaining unfamiliar with 'the shady sadness of a vale' (I, 3 and 1). Saturn is suspended in a liminal state as a figure who is 'Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit

²³ Paul Cantor, 'The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism', *The Review of Politics*, 69 (2007), pp. 375-401 (p. 400).

²⁴ The poem hereafter will be referred to as 'Immortality Ode'.

²⁵ Hurley and O'Neill, 'Epic', p. 120.

²⁶ Keats underlined line 45 of book 1 in his heavily annotated copy of *Paradise Lost*.

²⁷ Vincent Newey, 'Hyperion, The Fall of Hyperion, and Keats's Epic Ambitions' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 69-85 (p. 75).

²⁸ Sherwin, 'Dying into Life', p. 390.

²⁹ Sherwin, 'Dying into Life', p. 386.

³⁰ Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' in *Major Works*, pp. 297-302.

/ Here on this spot of earth' (I, 115-116); Saturn does not comfortably belong in either the earthly setting of a Wordsworthian speaker or the celestial location of a Miltonic hero.

Dissecting Saturn

It is by the second verse paragraph that the reader is located on the same physical level as Saturn. Much like Thea, who weeps at Saturn's feet for his fallen majesty (I, 71), the reader is also placed in a similar position of pathos as our eyes trace his footprints along 'the margin-sand' (I, 15). While our proximity to Saturn ostensibly offers the opportunity to see him in detail and understand his suffering, Keats places the reader in a position of sympathy despite denying us an ability to sympathise:

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
 No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
 And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
 His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
 Unscptred; and his realmless eyes were closed (I, 15-19).

In the first verse paragraph the reader is distanced from Saturn to the extent that he appears as minute and featureless as 'a stone' (I, 4). But by line 15 the reader is seemingly shown his titanic magnitude through the impression left in 'the sodden ground' (I, 17) by his 'large foot-marks' (I, 15). Although Saturn initially appears to match the stature of Thea to whom 'the tall Amazon / Had stood a pigmy's height' (I, 27-28), Keats plays with the reader's optical awareness in the opening stanzas so it is uncertain as to whether we are presented with an accurate depiction of Saturn's enormity or if we are in such close proximity to him that he appears magnified. By considering only one part of Saturn's body at a time, it seems as if the reader is now so close to the Titan that we cannot visualise him in his entirety. Line by line Keats performs a dissection of Saturn, starting with his 'his feet' (I, 16), then 'his old right hand' (I, 18), then his 'his realmless eyes' (I, 19) as if each individual body part is being placed under a microscope for the reader's inspection. The lens through which the reader views Saturn is like that of a medic or surgeon who is physically close to the physiognomy of the patient or sufferer, but emotionally abstracted and disaffected by their experience of pain. It was through his experiences as a medical student and surgeon's dresser at Guy's Hospital that Keats would have become accustomed to this double viewpoint of being emotionally distanced from extreme pain during intimate explorations of the internal and external workings and maladies

of the human body. Joanna Bourke draws upon the experiences of the nineteenth-century physician, Worthington Hooker, to explain that within an eighteenth and early nineteenth-century context of civility and gentlemanliness, the surgeon's professional respectability at a time prior to anaesthetic was dependent upon an ability both to distance himself from the pain of the patient as well as retain sympathy and sensitivity towards his distress. The surgeon had to avoid too closely identifying with the horrors and torments of the operating theatre in order to perform successful operations even as he evaded accusations of sadism and butchery:

the good physician might appear to have 'surrendered his humanity to the cold and stern demands of science' as he performed his duties with 'an unblanched face, a cool and collected air, and a steady hand', but 'there is sympathy in his bosom'.³¹

Whereas in the September 1818 letter to Dilke, Keats was concerned about the issue of pathologically identifying with Tom during his sickness, Hooker's description of the physician proposes a sympathetic approach to suffering that does not compromise the treatment of the patient or the health of the medic. The surgeon's gaze becomes an ideal that Keats attempts to replicate for the reader; the blending together of scientific objectivity and sensitivity towards the emotional and personal repercussions of sickness on the patient provides the onlooker with the deepest insight into malady and pain.

Yet while Holstein argues that for Keats, 'Being in the centre of pain confers intimate understanding of it',³² the reader's proximity to and individual examination of Saturn's features only reinforces what we do not know about the nature of his physicality and suffering. Instead, Keats's poetic dismemberment of Saturn presents the reader with the gradual dissolution of the god's identity. The reader cannot sympathise with Saturn because his body is described in the terms of absence through the repeated use of the suffix 'less' and the prefix 'un' in the negative adjectives 'nerveless', 'listless', 'realmless', and 'unsceptred'. As O'Neill indicates, 'the labour of recreation is spent on the imagining of a once heroic figure whose identity has gone' so that Saturn's identity is dependent upon the reader imagining what he once was and now has lost.³³ Much like the imprint of his 'large foot-marks' (I, 15), Saturn's body is identified

³¹ Joanna Bourke, 'Pain and the Politics of Sympathy, Historical Reflections, 1760s to 1960s' (Universiteit Utrecht: Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen, 2011), pp. 1-47 (p. 30). To access this lecture, please see ISBN: 987-94-6103-011-5.

³² Holstein, 'Keats: The Poet-Healer', p. 42

³³ O'Neill, 'Writing and History', p. 224.

through the hollowness of the impression left on the reader's imagination. Keats focusses the reader's attention specifically on the peripheries of Saturn's body, moving from his feet to his 'right hand' (I, 18) so that his body is presented to us as an outline with an absence at the core. The reader is not at 'the centre of pain' in the way that Holstein implies because the middle of Saturn's body, his torso and his face, are literally outside the line of the reader's vision. With his 'bow'd' (I, 20) head turned away from us and his eyes 'closed' (I, 19), the reader is not given an opportunity to read the expression on Saturn's countenance or gain an understanding of his response to his dethronement.

From the Vale of Tears to the Vale of Soul-Making

In his depiction of 'the vale of Soul-making' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 102), Keats argues that 'man [is] formed by circumstances' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 103), the 'fortifiers or alterers of his nature' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 103) that in turn lead to the making of a soul or identity. While Rodney Stenning Edgecombe explains that Keats 'redefin[es] the soul as consciousness tempered and developed by adversity',³⁴ *Hyperion* is a poem that interrogates or even reverses this notion from the offset by presenting a change in Saturn's circumstances, his move from being sceptred to 'unsceptred' (I, 19), as an alteration or adversity that leads to the negation of his identity. Rather than establishing an image of Saturn within a 'vale of soul-making' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 102), Keats physically situates the Titan in the 'the shady sadness of a vale' (I, 1) with Thea 'in tears' (I, 71) at his feet, weeping for the lost power of the Titans. Saturn is located in a space that is more akin to the Christian notion of the 'vale of tears from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary [sic] imposition of God and taken to Heaven'' (*Letter: John Keats II*, 102-103) against which Keats establishes the idea that one gains an identity through experiences of suffering. Robert M. Ryan indicates that Keats shows in his 31st March 1819 letter to Fanny Keats that he 'possessed considerable knowledge of the basic elements of Christian doctrine',³⁵ directing his sister to relevant Biblical passages to help her prepare for Confirmation. While Ryan goes on to speculate that Keats would have been familiar with the notion of the 'dim vast vale of tears' ('Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', 17) from Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty',³⁶ it is more likely that Keats would have first

³⁴ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, 'Keats, Hunt and Soul-Making', *Notes and Queries*, 49 (2002), pp. 37-38 (p. 38).

³⁵ Robert M. Ryan, 'The Vale of Soul-Making' in *Keats The Religious Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 178-211 (p. 186).

³⁶ See footnote 26 in Ryan, 'Vale of Soul-Making', p. 198; Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' in *Percy Bysshe Shelley the Major Words*, pp. 114-117.

encountered this expression not through Shelley's 'Hymn', but through Christian hymns and more specifically the 'Phrase in the Catholic prayer, "Salve Regina"' as Zachery Leader and Michael O'Neill suggest of Shelley's poem.³⁷ H. W. White and Neville Rogers explain that the idea of the vale of tears 'was among the current coin of Biblical phraseology' during Keats's lifetime and 'entered our language from the Vulgate [Bible, Psalm 83:6-7] and the Prayer book'.³⁸ Written only three weeks before the 'vale of soul-making' passage of Keats's letter to his brother in America, the March 1819 letter to Fanny includes a reference to 'Genesis 3 Chapter – Verse [15]' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 50) in which Adam and Eve are sent away from the garden of Eden and it is this biblical passage that the hymn of the Salve Regina also reflects upon:

Eve's banished children cry to thee.
We from this wretched vale of tears
Send sighs and groans unto thy ears.³⁹

At this moment in the prayer, the singer or the speaker of the hymn is allied with the fall of Adam and Eve as figures who are 'banished' from paradise and defined by a loss of their Edenic identity. The vale of tears becomes both a metaphorical and physical space within which identity is lost and wept for and it is this notion that Keats draws upon in the first book of *Hyperion* when Saturn mournfully asserts: 'I am gone / Away from my own bosom: I have left / My strong identity, my real self' (I, 112-114). Saturn does not initially seek to understand the meanings behind or reasons for his pain in the opening lines of book I, but sits inertly and silently suffering to the extent that he appears as a 'nerveless, listless' (I, 18) absence without body or movement.

Despite Saturn explicitly referring to this lack of identity in lines 112-114 of the poem, it is only when he begins to speak and to question the cause of his fall and the reasons for his pain that the reader starts to gain a picture of who he is, 'His faded eyes' (I, 90), his 'palsied tongue' (I, 93), 'his beard' (I, 93), and 'aspen-malady' (I, 94). It is the transition from inertia to action,

³⁷ See Zachery Leader and Michael O'Neill, 'Notes to Pages 114-120' in *Percy Bysshe Shelley the Major Words*, p. 720.

³⁸ H. W. White and Neville Rogers, 'The Vale of Tears in Keats, Shelley and Others', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, 24 (1973), pp. 16-18 (p. 16).

³⁹ Richard Challoner, 'Salve Regina' in *The Garden of the Soul: or a Manual of Spiritual Exercises and Instructions for Christians, who Living in the World, Aspire to Devotion* (London: 1775), p. 164.

silence to the questions: ‘Who had power / To make me desolate? whence came the strength?’ (I, 102-103) and ‘But cannot I create?’ (I, 142) that leads Saturn and Thea to leave the ‘shady sadness of a vale’ (I, 1) and join the other Titans to debate and understand the cause of their fall and the meanings of their pain. As Holstein writes, the Titan’s debate: ‘is a higher order of response than that of gods who merely endure pain, for they seek understanding that will lead to action’.⁴⁰ Keats’s interrogation of the opposition between the ‘vale of Soul-making’ and the ‘vale of tears’ in *Hyperion* challenges his April 1819 letter by presenting the two states as part of the same continuum. Whereas in the vale of tears a loss or change in identity is a cause of suffering, in the vale of soul-making the gaining and perfecting of an identity is dependent upon the experience of pain so that one state naturally leads to the other: one loses an identity, experiences pain, and in experiencing pain, has the potential to regain or perfect their identity. What distinguishes the vale of tears from the vale of soul-making in *Hyperion* is how one responds to suffering; Saturn only begins to rebuild and regain an identity when he actively questions pain. Ryan indicates, the vale of soul-making is about: ‘salvation *through* adversity rather than from it [...] [Man] works at his own salvation by coming to terms with his natural condition’.⁴¹ Rather than passively waiting for God to ‘arbitrarily redeem’ (*Letter: John Keats* II, 102-103) you from a vale of tears, Keats implies that you must work through the ‘Misery and heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and Oppression’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 281) of the world in order to achieve progression. Lionel Trilling’s suggestion that ‘Keats’s doctrine of soul-making leads us [...] back to Milton’ can be extended.⁴² It is specifically Milton’s paradoxical depiction of good and evil, pain and knowledge that Keats borrows: ‘Knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill’ (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 220). In the same way that Milton suggests that man gains a greater understanding of goodness and God’s benevolence through the knowledge and experience of evil and suffering, Keats also suggests that it is the Titans’ fall that enables them to move from the indolence and ignorance of ‘days of peace and slumberous calm’ (II, 335) to the knowledge of ‘woe extreme’ (II, 242); devolution does not straightforwardly represent regression, but facilitates a deeper level of understanding.

⁴⁰ Holstein, ‘The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain’, p. 45.

⁴¹ Ryan, ‘The Vale of Soul-Making’, p. 207.

⁴² Lionel Trilling, ‘The Poet as Hero: Keats in his Letters’ *The Opposing Self* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pp. 3-49 (p. 46).

Thea's Sympathy

The reader infers Saturn's pain both through that which is around him and through acts of imagination in the opening lines to book I. Keats does not directly represent Saturn's physical anguish, his 'palsied tongue' (I, 93) and 'aspen-malady' (I, 94), until almost a hundred lines into the poem so that initially it is through Thea's desire to 'comfort' (I, 53) him that we indirectly learn of his suffering:

One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
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 (I, 42-46).

The intimacy of Thea 'Touch[ing] his wide shoulders' (I, 24), placing her hand upon 'Saturn's bended neck' (I, 45), and speaking 'at the level of his ear' (I, 46) in 'solemn tenour' (I, 48) is presented like the gentle nursing of a mother whose 'kindred hand' (I, 23) attempts to locate and soothe the source of her child's pain. Thea understands Saturn's torment and is allied with the Titan as a fellow 'Goddess of the infant world' (I, 26) who is physically placed at the centre of Saturn's pain through an act of bodily contact. The reader, however, is situated as an outsider or an onlooker who witnesses this private interaction. O'Neill argues that 'Keats is seeking to know through sympathy' in the *Hyperion* poems.⁴³ Yet it is only through the 'listening fear' (I, 37) of Thea that the reader is able to sympathise with Saturn at this point in the poem. The reader's knowledge and understanding of Saturn's suffering is partial because we vicariously sympathise with his pain; there is a gap between the immortal suffering of the Titans and the mortal experiences of the reader. Fermanis argues that in *The Fall of Hyperion* Keats's 'representation of the poet-figure [...] is based on a sympathetic theory of moral judgement'.⁴⁴ But Keats also engages with and challenges the moral theorists of the enlightenment in the opening book of *Hyperion*. In *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith stresses how sympathy is dependent upon an act of imagination, stating that: '[Another man's emotions] never did and never can carry us beyond our own persons, and it is by the imagination only that we can form

⁴³ O'Neill, 'Writing and History', p. 232.

⁴⁴ Porscha Fermanis, 'Introduction: Keats, Enlightenment and Romanticism' in *John Keats and the Ideas of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1-16 (p. 15).

any conception of what are his sensations'.⁴⁵ In lines 42-46 of book 1 of *Hyperion*, Keats's use of simile promises to function as an imaginative aid in the way that Smith proposes, ostensibly enabling the reader to understand and sympathise with Thea and Saturn by creating a parallel between the 'cruel pain' of the gods and the 'aching' of the human heart. For Joanna Bourke, similes help 'to describe a [painful] sensation by illuminating the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar',⁴⁶ seeking to create a correlation between two disparate ideas or sensation so as to enable the reader to relate to a subjective experience of pain that we would not otherwise be able to comprehend. Newey also argues that simile highlights the closeness between the Titans sensations and human experience, indicating at this point in the poem that 'Keats's analogical syntax, "as if", conveys her [Thea] from immortal to mortal sensations'.⁴⁷ Despite Bourke and Newey's suggestions, Keats's simile, 'as if just there, / Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain' (I, 43-44), does not illuminate the nature of the gods' physiology or their sensory experiences in a way that the reader can comprehend, but reinforces the mystery of their pain, widening the gap between immortal anguish and human suffering. 'Keats's appeals to sensation remain just that', writes Noel Jackson, 'appeals self-consciously issued from the perspective of deferred or denied sensuous immediacy',⁴⁸ wherein the use of simile denies the reader a direct representation of Thea's pain. Although the placing of Thea's hand on her chest appears to point to where the source of her 'cruel pain' (I, 44) is located, the use of the term 'as if' (I, 43) highlights how this assumption is an act of subjective interpretation on the part of the poetic speaker. The reader is not directly informed of what is 'just there' (I, 43) in Thea's chest, whether she feels physical pain at all, and if so where it is located. Instead, the reader is told what Thea's external gesture seems to signify as Keats deliberately fails to provide us with a concrete referent of what is contained within Thea's breast; Keats prevents the reader from identifying with certainty what the touch of her hand means. Smith argues that in order for one to sympathise with another's emotions and feelings there must be a distance between the experiences of the sympathiser and the sensations of the sympathised which the imagination overcomes. But Keats's use of simile challenges this by showing how a lack of information or point of reference prevents the imagination from bridging this gap. Although Keats's simile comes frustratingly close to enabling the reader to identify with Thea's suffering, the reader

⁴⁵ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Bourke, 'Pain and the Politics of Sympathy, Historical Reflections, 1760s to 1960s', p. 12.

⁴⁷ Newey, 'Keats's Epic Ambitions' p. 75.

⁴⁸ Noel Jackson, 'John Keats and the Sense of the Future' in *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 165-196 (p. 165).

cannot fully imagine or comprehend her pain. Keats abstracts the reader from the Titans' experiences to the point of 'aching ignorance' (III, 107).

Pain, Language, and Translation

The deliberate failure of Keats's simile to translate Thea's sensation of pain into an experience that the reader can fully access, underpins a deeply problematic and complex relationship between pain and poetic expression in *Hyperion*. Keats not only creates a distance between the physical or sensory experiences of mortals and immortals but also establishes a gap between how we articulate those impressions through language, thereby engaging with contemporary debates with figures such as Byron and Shelley about 'words and things' or, as William Keach describes, the 'coalescing of verbal signs with natural objects' and experiences.⁴⁹ Keats was interested in issues of translation and linguistic representation from the early years of his career. The 1816 sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' shows Keats valorising the creative potential of literature in translation in which he tells us that he only grasped the beauty and true meaning of Homer once 'he heard Chapman sing out loud and bold' ('On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', 8). Thomas Day writes that 'in order to be able to touch the text, to "breathe its pure serene", he [Keats] has to encounter it in an impure form, in translation'.⁵⁰ In *Hyperion*, the reader is told that the impurities of translated language only serve to remove us further from understanding, 'looking into', or analysing the meanings of the Titans' original language. Keats establishes the poetic speaker not as a Homer figure but as a failed Chapman who acknowledges an inability to capture the 'pure serene' ('On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', 7) or true meaning and beauty of the original language of the Titans:

Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
 In solemn tenour and deep organ tone:
 Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
 Would come in these like accents; O how frail
 To that large utterance of the early Gods! (I, 47-51).

⁴⁹ William Keach, 'Words are Things' in *Arbitrary Power, Romanticism, Language, Politics* (Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 23-45 (p. 24).

⁵⁰ Thomas Day, 'Sensuous and Scholarly Reading in Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"', *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary*, 8 (2013), pp. 115-122 (p. 118).

Throughout *Hyperion*, Keats repeatedly highlights how the reader can only access the direct speech of the Titans through an act of translation performed by the poet speaker. Thea's 'mourning words' become dilutions of her original expression that lose something of their strength and passion when conveyed through the 'feeble' or 'frail' language of mortals so that the reader can only partially comprehend the intensity of the Titans' experience of loss and suffering. Keats seems to anticipate and echo Shelley's conception that it is vain to 'seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet' (*A Defence of Poetry*, 678),⁵¹ but departs from a Shelleyan understanding of words and things in *Hyperion* by hinting at something more universal in the meanings that underlie 'the deep organ tone' (I, 48), 'accents', and sounds of 'utterance'. For Shelley, 'language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has relation to thoughts alone' (*A Defence of Poetry*, 678) so that each person communicates through their own distinct expression whose referent exists exclusively within the mind or 'imperial faculty' (*A Defence of Poetry*, 677) of each individual. Although Shelley attempts to use poetic language to 'unburthen my inmost soul' ('On Love', 631),⁵² he admits that 'I have found my language misunderstood' ('On Love', 631), depicting linguistic communication as a profoundly private act which corresponds with unique ideas that are frequently difficult for others to access and comprehend. While language is a system that both facilitates and is dependent upon the mental life of thought for Shelley, *Hyperion* promises something more universal in the physiological properties of the spoken word. Keats highlights the sensory qualities of Thea's language at this moment in the poem by depicting language as spoken 'utterance' that relies upon the 'tongue' and the muscles of the mouth, the 'accents' produced by the voice box and the 'tone' of how Thea's voice sounds to the ear. Keach argues that Byron was aware of the materiality of 'words' as saleable and shareable 'things' or commodities that are not exclusively reliant on the individual thoughts of the author but also capable of making 'thousands, if not millions think' (*Don Juan*, II, 795).⁵³ For his part, Keats draws attention to the corporeality of words as biological 'things' that are directly dependent upon the hidden workings and meanings of the body. As Richardson explains in relation to the neural anatomist Charles Bell, whose dissections of the nervous system Keats would have been familiar with through attending the lectures of Sir Astley Cooper at Guy's Hospital: 'The

⁵¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry' in *Percy Bysshe Shelley The Major Works*, pp. 674-701. All subsequent references to this work will hereafter be cited parenthetically.

⁵² Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'On Love', *Percy Bysshe Shelley The Major Works*, pp. 631-632.

⁵³ Lord Byron, 'Don Juan' in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, pp. 373-879; Keach, 'Words and Things' in *Arbitrary Power*, p. 24.

nervous system and its workings are a hermetic language to read and decipher'.⁵⁴ It is the visceral sounds, cries, and workings of the body that become a point of semiotic ambivalence that are difficult to translate at this moment of the poem. Timothy Zeigenhagen and de Almeida comment upon the 'hermeneutic sign-reading of disease practiced by early nineteenth-century physicians, who were trained to "read the living human bodies"',⁵⁵ arguing that it is the hermeneutical gaze of the physician that is given to Apollo at the end of the third book as a tool for analysing the meanings of pain and for alleviating suffering. Yet neither critic comments upon Keats's exploration of how the reader might accurately interpret the symptoms of disease or the external signs of suffering that the Titans undergo in the first two books of the poem. Keats sets out to find a hermeneutics for the hermetic, a method of interpretation that can uncover the hidden meanings which underlie the external physiological signs of the body.⁵⁶ *Hyperion* is not so much about axioms in philosophy that are proved upon the pulses (*Letters John Keats I*, 279) as Keats comments in his 3rd May 1818 letter to Reynolds, but how the sensations of the pulses are translated into knowable and meaningful axioms.

Apostrophe and the Sounds of Pain

Hyperion proposes a closeness as well as a distance between the physiology of the Titans' utterance and the mortal 'tongue' of the reader and poet speaker. In the same way that Thea's speech mourns the weakness of the Titans after their loss of divine power, the poet speaker also bewails the limitations of human utterance and its inability to capture the enormity and intensity of the Titans' suffering. The desperate cry of 'O how frail' in line 50 anticipates Thea's repeated exclamation: "'O wherefore sleepest thou?"' (I, 54), 'O aching time! O moments big as years!' (I, 64), and 'O thoughtless' (I, 68). Keats's repetition of this open and low-frequency vowel sound as well as the assonance of the 'oh', 'or', 'ow' and 'eh' sounds in the words 'wherefore', 'thou', 'moments', and 'thoughtless' underpins Thea's speech with the sound of a continued wailing so that while the poet speaker is unable to translate the full intensity and signified meanings of Thea's 'mourning words', he nevertheless attempts to capture the 'like accents' of how they sound to the ear and recreate the intonations of her spoken utterance. Thea's refrain of 'O' ostensibly operates outside of linguistic representation as a cry of pain without a specific referent, appearing to be common to all languages in that it is dependent

⁵⁴ Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', p. 114.

⁵⁵ Timothy Zeigenhagen, 'Keats, Professional Medicine, and the Two Hyperions', *Literature and Medicine*, 21 (2002), pp. 281-305 (p. 295). De Almeida, 'Reading the Faces of Pain' in *Romantic Medicine*, pp. 54-58.

⁵⁶ Chapter 4 on *Lamia* also explores Keats's engagement with pleasure, Hermes, hermeticism, and the hermeneutic.

upon sound alone and does not need translating. Keats anticipates Elaine Scarry's understanding of the relationship between pain and language, in which 'Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned'.⁵⁷ By having both Thea and the poet speaker produce the same sound to express their suffering, the speaker seems to find a parallel between the preverbal sounds of pain that mortals and immortals make; it is not only the language of 'human beings' that fails to accommodate Thea's experience of suffering, but also the language of 'immortal beings'. Thea's suffering is so great or 'large' (I, 51) that it breaks outside of the boundaries of linguistic representation.

The reader can interpret Keats's use of assonance and the exclamation 'O' as an attempt to escape the problem of translation by recreating the sounds of suffering rather than imperfectly replicating the semantic meanings of Thea's language. Yet the passage also suggests that the Titans' utterances are literally 'too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe' (I, 160). It is uncertain as to whether 'O' is an extralinguistic sound of suffering uttered by Thea that does not require translation or a symbol used by the poetic speaker to stand in place for the negation of an immortal word that cannot be spoken by and has no equivalent in the language of mortals. 'O' becomes a metaphoric utterance in that it is 'representative or suggestive of something else' that is not immediately present.⁵⁸ While the image of 'our feeble tongue' in line 49 appears to be straightforwardly metonymic, where 'tongue' represents the concept of language as a whole, the metonymic images that Keats uses to represent linguistic expression throughout the poem are frequently of the human body so that metonymy borders on the literal. Keats repeatedly represents the limitations of linguistic expression through the physiological or sensory aspects of the spoken word from 'feeble tongue' (I, 49), 'large utterance' (I, 51), to 'mortal tongue' (I, 160) so that it seems as if Thea's words are biologically too large to be spoken through the mouths and bodies of humans. This comes to the fore in lines 66 and 67 through the poet speaker's translation of Thea's speech: 'And press it so upon our weary griefs / That unbelief has not a space to breathe' (I, 67). Keats tests the agility of the reader's tongue in these lines by deliberately using the consonance and alliteration of fricative and sibilant consonants that are dependent upon the tongue and the lips when spoken aloud. Through

⁵⁷ Elaine Scarry, 'Introduction' in *The Body in Pain The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 3-23 (p. 4).

⁵⁸ 'Metaphor', *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/117328?redirectedFrom=metaphor#eid>> [accessed 6/1/2016].

placing the sounds ‘th’, ‘f’, and ‘s’ in such close proximity within these lines in the words ‘press’, ‘so’, ‘griefs’, ‘that’, ‘unbelief’, ‘space’, and ‘breathe’, it is easy to mispronounce the words in the last line so that the reader might accidentally replace the ‘f’ of ‘unbelief’ with a ‘th’; the reader’s tongue is potentially too feeble to change smoothly between the sounds of ‘f’ and ‘th’ in the same way as Thea. Keats implies that the poetic speaker cannot translate the language of immortals because our tongues are physiologically too weak to utter the same sounds as the Titans.

‘O Aching Time’

Steeped in poetic tradition and an artificiality that is intimately bound up with the expression of human emotion, ‘O’ is not straightforwardly a visceral sound that functions outside of language, but stands on the border between literal and figurative expression as a cry that can also be viewed as a highly stylised apostrophe. Keats gives equivocality to the corporeal aspects of expression as well as the figurative and artificial so that language signifies on multiple levels:

O aching time! O moments big as years!
 All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
 And press it so upon our weary griefs
 That unbelief has not a space to breathe (I, 64-67).

Keats’s metaphor ‘aching time’ approaches synaesthesia at this moment in the poem by confusing the temporal and kinetic with the tactile. The movement of time is described in terms of the felt pain of an ache, suggesting that Thea’s sensation of loss is so acute that it is unendurable from moment to moment. Keats anticipates Barbara J. Eckstein’s suggestion that ‘Pain is not in time or space; it makes its own time’.⁵⁹ Pain alters Thea’s perception of time’s movement, stretching it out so that she feels as if it is stopping altogether. As a linguistic tool that also resists temporality, the apostrophe is intimately associated with expressions of suffering. Jonathan Culler argues:

⁵⁹ Barbara J. Eckstein, ‘Torture and Interrogation: J. M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*’ in *The Language of Fiction in a World of Pain Reading Politics as Paradox* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), pp. 68-91 (p. 73).

Even if the birds were only glimpsed once in the past, to apostrophise them as ‘ye birds’ is to locate them in the time of the apostrophe — a special temporality which is the set of all moments at which writing can say ‘now’.⁶⁰

By apostrophising time, Keats halts narrative progression, drawing the reader’s attention away from Thea’s interaction with Saturn to focus on the object being addressed. The apostrophe temporarily forces the reader to abandon the linear temporality of the poetic narrative to think directly about the relationship between Thea’s suffering and the movement of time. During these lines, her pain is located continually in the present moment of the reader’s imagination. The metre shows how Keats literally stops time after the first two feet of line 64. The use of an exclamation mark creates such a strong caesura in the line that the reader is given an opportunity to pause and reflect upon what the metaphor ‘aching time’ means or signifies. Time does not heal but slowly ‘swell[s] out’ suffering, wherein the passing of time is depicted in the grotesque imagery of the diseased human body. The words ‘swell’ and ‘press’ creates the image of a growth that pushes against the lungs to the point of suffocation. By presenting the expanse of unending time within an image of constriction, years squeezed into moments or moments swollen out into years, Keats again returns to issues of proximity and distance. In the same way that Ogden argues that ‘Temporal distance is converted into spatial images in [...] *The Prelude*’,⁶¹ Keats also confuses space and time in Thea’s extended metaphor so that temporal distance paradoxically leads to the confining limitations of spatial proximity. The physical experience of mortality and time’s movement becomes like a disease inflicted upon the Titans in consequence of their fall from power so that it seems as if the temporal presses upon the nerves as an intolerable aching sensation. ‘Aching time’ is not necessarily metaphorical. Rather, it behaves as an accurate depiction of Thea’s sensations after her fall from celestial power. As Anya Taylor writes:

the Titans move from being forever immortal to being forever mortal. It is a terrible moment of transition from one absolute state to another, from what Stuart Sperry calls timelessness to time, or myth to history.⁶²

⁶⁰ Jonathan Culler, ‘Apostrophe’ in *The Pursuit of Signs Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1981), pp. 135-154 (p. 149).

⁶¹ Ogden, ‘The Power of Distance’, p. 257.

⁶² Anya Taylor, ‘Superhuman Silence: Language in *Hyperion*’, *Studies in English Literature*, 19 (1979), pp. 673-687 (p. 679).

At this moment of ‘transition’, as Taylor indicates, the Titans experience for the first time what it is to have a mortal body that ages and is capable of disease, decay, and the physical pain of ‘aspen-malady’ (I. 94). Keats presents the Titan’s physiological transition from immortality to mortality even more explicitly in *The Fall of Hyperion* when Saturn cries ‘O, O, the pain, the pain of feebleness’ (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 429). The reader cannot relate to the physical sensation of what it is to feel the transition from immortality to unending mortality or understand the ache of experiencing the movement of time after dwelling in timelessness. Yet, Keats masterfully manipulates the form of his blank verse in *Hyperion* so at the level of language, the reader can encounter the confusion of space and time in the same way as the Titans. The first two lines of the extended metaphor of ‘aching time’ are regularly paced with the use of caesurae in line 64 and a natural pause in the syntax at the end of line 65 allowing the reader time to think through Thea’s words. But the use of enjambment, internal half-rhyme in the words ‘griefs’, ‘unbelief’, and ‘breathe’ and the lack of punctuation in lines 66 and 67 establishes a faster and more rushed pace to the lines, creating the sensation of breathlessness. By appearing to make the 20 syllables of lines 66 and 67 move faster than those of lines 64 and 65, Keats creates the impression that time can either travel faster or slower within the same spatial limit of ten iambic feet. Although Taylor argues that ‘in a world “portion’d to a giant nerve,” these fragile lines on a page, these meters, syllables, and vowels in the air, are insufficient’,⁶³ Keats uses the rhythms and sounds of mortal words when spoken aloud through the ‘air’ or breath of human utterance to reveal the Titans’ bodily sensations.

Saturn’s Self-Estrangement

It is the Titans’ state of transition, Saturn’s placement ‘Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit / Here on this spot of earth’ (I, 115-116), that Taylor identifies as the reason why it is ‘so difficult for these beings to speak at this moment’ in the poem.⁶⁴ If it is the Titans’ state of transition that impedes their ability to speak, then Taylor’s argument can be extended. Saturn is estranged from a sense of self because he cannot translate his experience of mortal pain into an immortal language through which he can comprehend his physiological sensations. By drawing attention to Saturn’s ‘palsied tongue’ (I, 93) at the point at which he is about to speak, Keats not only highlights the mortality of his body and deteriorating physical state but also the Titan’s linguistic impotence. Stuart M. Sperry reads Saturn’s linguistic failure within the

⁶³ Taylor, ‘Superhuman Silence’, p. 674.

⁶⁴ Taylor, ‘Superhuman Silence’, p. 679.

context of the ‘egotistical sublime’, interpreting him as the figure of the Wordsworthian poet who, obsessing over his own plight and powerlessness, has outlived his relevance: ‘we realise we are in touch with strong creative energies once omnipotent but now outworn’.⁶⁵ Yet Keats does not straightforwardly present Saturn as symbolic of the Wordsworthian poet. Saturn is also a living and breathing Titan who has undergone a profound change in bodily circumstances. Saturn’s speech presents the fallen Titan desperately asking ‘where is Saturn?’ (I, 134), showing how he is unaccustomed to the experiences and limitations of his body:

Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
Is Saturn’s; tell me, if thou hear’st the voice
Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
Naked and bare of its great diadem,
Peers like the front of Saturn. (I, 98-102).

Having remained silent for almost the first 100 lines of the poem, Saturn’s first utterance is driven by a desire to recognise his physical body, not only revealing his unfamiliarity with how the ‘wrinkling brow’ and ‘feeble shape’ of his body looks, but also drawing attention to a change in how his ‘voice’ sounds or even how he hears and perceives sensory impressions. Saturn refers to himself in the third person a total of five times in his opening speech, three of which occur in the first sentence, immediately establishing his feeling of alienation from his old ‘strong identity’ (I, 114) and ‘real self’ (I, 114). Saturn attempts to identify himself through the affirmation of Thea, a figure he does not recognise by looking at but by feeling and sensing her presence: ‘Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face’ (I, 96); it remains unknown whether Thea has undergone physical alteration in the same way as Saturn. While Keats suggests in his September 1818 letter to Dilke that identity does not exist in isolation, but can be pressed upon you (*Letter: John Keats I*, 368), shaped, or confirmed by others, Saturn’s repeated imperative ‘tell me’ is not met with the comforting affirmation of a fellow Titan, but instead with ‘Thea’s sobbing deep’ (I, 139). Saturn’s words, which set out to regain a sense of self and acquire an answer to the question, ‘where is Saturn?’ (I, 134) are rendered ineffective.

Saturn’s speech reveals the inefficacy of his language and its inability to effect change or comprehend bodily sensations. However, the beauty and rhetorical prowess of Keats’s verse in

⁶⁵ Stuart M. Sperry, ‘The First Hyperion’ in *Keats the Poet*, pp. 155-197 (p. 180).

the passage quoted above suggests that Saturn still retains something of his old majestic power over language:

O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
 Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face;
 Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
 Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
 Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
 Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
 Naked and bare of its great diadem,
 Peers like the front of Saturn. (I, 95-102).

Saturn's opening sentence initially appears lengthy and clumsy, containing four semicolons and multiple clauses that work against the metre of the blank verse. The use of enjambment in lines 98 and 99 is stopped short by caesurae placed after the first three syllables of lines 99 and 100 that disrupt the iambic rhythm. Even though the lines can be scanned within the iambic pentameter of Keats's blank verse, the reader must pause at the semicolons which appear in the middle of the second foot of each line so that the next phrase: 'tell me,' sounds trochaic when read aloud. The trochaic rhythm of these words is also reinforced by the use of a second caesural comma that isolates the phrase and is awkwardly placed in the middle of the third foot of lines 99 and 100. While the use of this comma appears to serve no semantic purpose other than to highlight the poor grammar of Saturn's syntax and the broken and stuttering nature of his 'palsied tongue' (I, 93), the imperative 'tell me' gains greater force and strength of command when uttered within a trochaic rhythm. The repetition of 'tell me' linguistically functions as a rhetorical conceit that while having 'influence benign' (I, 108) retains eloquence enough to solicit an emotional response both from Thea and the reader. Despite suggesting that he is completely alienated from his former self, Saturn's indication that he is 'smother'd up, / And buried from all godlike exercise' (I, 106-107) implies that although he no longer retains the power to 'exercise' celestial command or effect change, his former self is nevertheless 'buried' or hidden within, becoming the foundation upon which his new identity has been built; pain does not annihilate the self for Keats, but constructs and alters an existing identity.

Keats makes it unclear whether we should view Saturn in the terms of mortal or immortal pain and bodily experience. The desperate and unanswered instruction to 'tell me, if this wrinkling

brow, / Naked and bare of its great diadem, / Peers like the front of Saturn' (I, 100-102) shows Saturn employing the vocabulary and commanding authority of a monarch through the use of the words 'diadem' and 'peers', even as it presents him in an image of vulnerability. With his crown removed, the concern and anxiety that contort his forehead is exposed for all to see as if his pain is humiliatingly put on show. Saturn's experience of loss goes further than his fall from power, but also encompasses his loss of personal grace and composure:

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
 And made his hands to struggle in the air,
 His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
 His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease (I, 135-38).

Whereas in the opening lines the reader can only grasp an image of Saturn through understanding what he is not, in these lines we are presented with specific depictions of his physical form and bodily movements, from his 'feet', the movement of 'his hands', his 'Druid' hair, 'eyes', and the silence of 'his voice'. Saturn does not conduct himself with the calmness of a Titan who once lived and ruled with 'peaceful sway above man's harvestings' (I, 110), but is moved to such extreme passion that he is lifted to his feet, wildly gesticulating with his hands after sitting for a period of time in dejected indolence. In teasing out Keats's engagement with Shakespeare, Greg Kucich argues that 'The anguish of Lear, the old king stripped bewilderingly of his authority, permeates the confused grief of Saturn, the old, dethroned king of the Titans in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*'.⁶⁶ In the same way that Lear's passion and emotional anguish leads to a loss of dignity and sanity in Shakespeare's play, Saturn's passion similarly manifests itself in the symptoms of physical disease and sickness, demonstrated in the image of oozing sweat and fevered eyes. Taylor implies that it is the transition from a perfect immortal form to an imperfect mortal body that allows the Titans to experience earthly suffering for the first time. But it is uncertain as to whether the Titans' loss of power brings about physical alteration and the ability to experience mortal pain, or if the emotional pain and humiliation of losing their celestial influence manifests itself externally in the alteration of voice and countenance. The Titans retain the 'wide shoulders' (I, 24) and tall Amazonian

⁶⁶ Greg Kucich, 'Keats and English Poetry' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 186-202 (p. 194).

stature (I, 27) of gods even as they appear in the throes of mortal malady so that the nature of their affective experience of suffering is enigmatically obscure at this point in the poem.

Healing or Torture?

It is not until the second book of *Hyperion* that Keats unequivocally presents Saturn and the Titans' experiences as that of mortals. Richardson writes: 'the gods feel, perceive, and emote as we do, only in a bigger way' in the opening of this book,⁶⁷ in which Keats presents the Titans' pain as a magnified image of human injury and suffering:

Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
 Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
 Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp't and screw'd;
 Without motion, save of their big hearts
 Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
 With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse (II, 23-28)

Holstein argues: 'of all the Romantic poets Keats renders the most vivid, direct portraits of suffering' and this passage of *Hyperion* is perhaps the best example in Keats's oeuvre.⁶⁸ The 'effigies of pain' (I, 228) that Hyperion can only imagine at the end of the first book of the poem are catalogued here with the vivid and gory detail of a surgeon who, operating upon the diseased or injured body, observes and describes the symptom of the patient. Keats presents the reader with images of bodies that seem as if they have been 'screw'd' or drilled into and opened up so that we can physically inspect the 'veins', 'hearts', and innards pulsating inside the Titans' torsos. The use of the word 'sanguine' in line 28 draws upon the colour and image of blood and the idea of a 'feverous boiling' pulse also creates the impression of a dangerously high temperature. The listing of these three polysyllabic adjectives, 'sanguine', 'feverous', and 'boiling', appears without commas, quickening the pace of the line in order to replicate the Titans' fast-moving heartbeats as if their blood is gurgling whirlpool-like through their tormented bodies.⁶⁹ While Keats's similes often avoid directly presenting the horrors of wounded and bleeding bodies, the use of simile in line 25 brings the reader even closer to

⁶⁷ Richardson, 'Keats and the Glories of the Brain', p. 136.

⁶⁸ Holstein, 'The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain', p. 35.

⁶⁹ See the definition of 'Gurge', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/82619?rkey=R5UES1&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 16/2/2016].

understanding the Titans' physical pain. By drawing a parallel between the physical paralyses of the Titans' bodies and the 'veins' or fissures of metal ore that are embedded in rock, Keats not only creates a sense of suffocation to reinforce the image of fitful breathing and heaving chests, but also uses anatomical language so that it seems as if the reader is repulsively close to the 'veins' of bodies which are opened up and spilling over the edges. Keats creates a dangerous likeness between the torments of the torturer and the butchery of the surgeon. The image of the Titans 'dungeon'd' with 'limbs lock'd up', teeth clenched, and bodies 'crampt and screw'd' creates the impression of a prisoner who has been confined within an iron maiden or an object designed to inflict pain. Yet the Titans also appear to be in the middle of a surgical procedure. With teeth clenched as if they are biting upon a cloth to muffle their screams and release their tension, the Titans seem to be restrained or 'Without motion' so that the surgeon can perform his treatment effectively. It is the alignment of surgery and torture that reveals a deep anxiety at this point in *Hyperion*. Much like the surgeon who opens up and probes wounds to understand and treat the source of pain, Keats suggests that those who seek to explore the reasons for and meanings behind suffering have the potential to cause greater anguish and worsen the condition of the patient. William Michael Rossetti notes in 1887 in one of the earliest biographies of Keats: 'Keats indeed always denied that he abandoned surgery for the express purpose of taking to poetry: he alleged that his motive had been the dread of doing some mischief in his surgical operations' and it is this dread that Keats carries into his poetic endeavours.⁷⁰ While Holstein continues to argue that 'It was to Keats's purposes, then, to describe pain clearly if he wished to alleviate the sufferings of humanity',⁷¹ Keats's most 'direct portrait of pain' is underpinned by a problem that Holstein fails to address. Although describing and examining the internal workings of the injured body is a task necessary to treat suffering, both the poet and the medic have the potential to cause senseless and avoidable pain. The 'poet-healer', who Holstein identifies in the title of his article, threatens to become 'poet-torturer'.

Mortality as Pharmakon

Mortality is not straightforwardly presented as malady in the poem; knowledge and truth are a beauty arrived at through the bodily experience of pain. By establishing a proximity between the beneficial, healing properties of medicine and the harmful, maleficent nature of surgery, Keats anticipates Derridean notions of the *pharmakon*; a word that etymologically has roots in

⁷⁰ William Michael Rossetti, *Life of John Keats* (London: Walter Scott, 1887), p. 20.

⁷¹ Holstein, 'The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain', p. 35.

the ideas of ‘medicine and/or poison’.⁷² In the same way that Apollo is a figure who represents medicine, pestilence, and poetry, the pharmakon also proposes that the poison and the remedy are located within the same source, an ambivalence that Keats plays upon in *Hyperion*: ‘Fate / Had poured a mortal oil upon his [Saturn’s] head, / A disanointing poison’ (II, 96-98). The language of medicine is inverted here so that the healing properties that are usually associated with the apothecary’s balm or ‘oil’ are refigured as the cause of Saturn’s pain. Rather than describing mortality directly as a harmful pestilence, Keats uses the negative adjective ‘disanointing’ to describe ‘mortal oil’ in the terms of what it is not: a healing ointment, so that the reader paradoxically sees mortality in the terms of its potential to ‘anoint’ or behave as a medicine. The assonance of the vowel sound ‘or’ in the words ‘poured’ and ‘mortal’ which is again repeated in the diphthong ‘oi’ in the words ‘oil’, ‘disanointing’, and ‘poison’, also draws the reader’s ear and eye to the syllable ‘noint’ of this negative adjective so that it is the concept of applying a ‘medicinal unguent’ that the reader focuses on;⁷³ mortality is indirectly presented as a pharmakon. De Almeida explains:

pestilence could be a pharmakon or remedy, the beneficial virtue of a substance does not prevent it from causing pain, and pain and disease themselves could be the agents for health and the absence of pain’.⁷⁴

In the same way that the surgeon’s treatment paradoxically leads to a suffering necessary for the recovery of the sick and injured, pain does not always signal the presence of something destructive or nefarious, but is a necessary trial to improve the human condition. While mortality is presented as a ‘disanointing poison’ that leads to the Titans’ agony and strips them of their power, it is this degradation that provides the Titans with the bodily sensations necessary to experience and access the ‘pain of truth’ (II, 201). Derrida describes the agony of remedy as a ‘type of painful pleasure’ that ‘partakes of both good and ill, of the agreeable and the disagreeable’.⁷⁵ Yet, both in the case of surgery and in the Titans’ experience of torment, pain and pleasure are not necessarily experienced simultaneously but temporally distanced from one another. The pain of the remedy in the present moment leads to the pleasure of future

⁷² Jacques Derrida, ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’ in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), pp. 1697- 1734 (p. 1701).

⁷³ ‘Noint’, *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/127651?redirectedFrom=noint#eid>> [accessed 19/2/2016].

⁷⁴ De Almeida, ‘The Pharmakon’ in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, pp. 148- 149.

⁷⁵ Derrida, ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’, p. 1716.

health or progress so that as one suffers one must abstract themselves from their immediate circumstances, projecting themselves into the future to envisage the ‘agreeable’ or beneficial qualities that suffering will bring about. It is the anguish of ‘aching time’ (I, 64) or mortal experience that brutally ‘swell[s] out the monstrous truth’ (I, 65) for the newly fallen Titans, providing them with experiential knowledge that they were unable to gain from their abstracted position within the heavens, studying and theorising from Saturn’s ‘old spirit-leaved book’ (II, 133).

Oceanus, Pain, and Truth.

For Keats, there is not only a kernel of beauty at the centre of pain, but also a core of ugliness and suffering at the heart of beauty. Much like a surgeon, Oceanus occupies the role of a *pharmakon* figure. Responding to Saturn’s desperate plea to ‘give us help!’ (II, 166), Oceanus presents truth as a ‘balm’ (II, 243) that will provide ‘much comfort’ (II, 179) for the Titans, as well as alluding to ‘the pain of truth’ (II, 201) as a ‘proof’ (II, 177) that should not be heard by those who wish to ‘nurse your agonies’ (II, 174). As ‘Sophist and sage’ (II, 168), Oceanus situates the Titans’ pain within a wider narrative of progress, proposing a theory of suffering that Newey suggests ‘offers a far-seeing wisdom that makes comforting sense of revolution and war (mythic and European) in terms of evolutionary design’.⁷⁶ Yet, far from making ‘sense’ of suffering, the philosophy of pain that Oceanus articulates is convoluted, contradictory, and raises more questions than it answers:

Now comes the pain of truth, to whom ‘tis pain;
O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty (II, 202-205).

Oceanus presents pain as a symptom of truth even as he suggests that to experience the truth straightforwardly as pain is evidence of one’s ‘folly’ or ‘deficiency of understanding’ and thus an inability to comprehend such truth in all its complexity and nakedness.⁷⁷ Oceanus’s complex presentation of truth bears striking similarities to Keats’s early letter of 21st December 1817 to

⁷⁶ Newey, ‘Keats’s Epic Ambitions’, p. 73.

⁷⁷ ‘Folly’, *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/72576?rskey=WSwJkk&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 22/02/2016].

his brothers. Commenting on Benjamin West's painting 'Death on a Pale Horse', Keats writes that, 'the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 192). In the same way that Oceanus suggests 'sovereignty' can be achieved through calmly tolerating the experience of pain, Keats indicates in his letter that something agreeable might be extracted from the most intense experiences of suffering and disease. The content of West's painting is taken from Revelation 6:8 of the Bible that presents Death as a rider on a pale horse to whom 'power was given [...] over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth'.⁷⁸ West's painting draws out these biblical images of pain and suffering by depicting harrowing figures of the sick and wounded, men and women being trampled under the hoofs of horses or mauled by lions and armed soldiers. Although Keats argues that in West's painting there is not any 'momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 192), he nevertheless indicates that one can abstract the disagreeable elements of the repulsive to allow one to access the 'Beauty & Truth' that underlies pain, pestilence, and ugliness.

It is the use of the words 'intensity' and 'evaporate' that Sperry notices at this point of the letter, reading Keats's theory of beauty and truth within the context of chemical distillation. Sperry explains that during his time studying at Guy's Hospital, Keats would have learnt that distillation occurs:

"When evaporation is performed in vessels either perfectly or nearly closed, so that the volatile parts which are raised in one part of the apparatus, may be received and condensed in the other part." "Abstraction" refers specifically to the process of distillation.⁷⁹

To distil or abstract two elements from one chemical compound is not completely to remove or eradicate either element, it is to separate and capture both so that the two remain distinct from one another but contained within the same space. By utilising the language of chemistry in his letter, Keats not only proposes that truth and beauty can be extracted from suffering and

⁷⁸ 'Revelation 6:8' in *King James Bible Online*, <<http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Revelation-Chapter-6/#8>> [accessed 28/02/2016].

⁷⁹ Stuart M. Sperry Jr., 'Keats and the Chemistry of Poetic Creation', *PMLA*, 85 (1970), pp. 268-277 (p. 273).

that which is disagreeable, he also indicates that if all consideration of the repulsive were lost then truth and beauty would also be made inaccessible.

In *Hyperion*, poetry becomes the means by which Keats challenges and explores the ideas and theories sketched out in his letters. If truth is painful or contained within that which is disagreeable, then Keats questions how one experiences truth without pain in the way Oceanus proposes. More than this, if pain is the means by which one arrives at truth, then failing to experience that anguish or attempting to deny suffering would surely inhibit one's ability to access truth. Oceanus implies that it is through an act of imagination that the Titans might abstract themselves from the pain of bodily experience by 'envisag[ing] circumstance, all calm' (II, 204). Similarly, Keats writes of West's painting that 'there is nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 192), suggesting that 'the excellency of every Art is in its intensity' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 192) or an ability to spark the reader's imagination into an emotional or physical reaction. Yet, neither Keats's letter nor Oceanus's speech indicate how one is meant to forfeit immediate bodily reality to lose sight of the disagreeable elements of art or a painful 'circumstance' and focus on that which is beautiful or agreeable. As O'Neill argues:

the poem's escape into abstractions proposed by Oceanus is partial. [...] the quickness to glide over the problem of pain, which undergoes Oceanus's speech for some readers, betrays itself. In *Hyperion*, there are other 'naked truths': the unignorable, hard to accommodate facts of misery and distress.⁸⁰

The theory Oceanus proposes is so distanced from the 'misery and distress' of physical reality that it never specifies how one might stop feeling either emotionally or at the level of the body; he offers no solution as to how the Titans are supposed to achieve the necessary calm that would enable them to reach 'the top of sovereignty'. Oceanus finally dashes any hopes the Titans had of excelling beyond their dispossessors to reach such heights by indicating that on the Titans' 'heels a fresher perfection treads' (II, 212). Even if the Titans were to interpret the 'top of sovereignty' as an internal state of personal progress and enlightenment, rather than the celestial power that they desperately wish to regain, Oceanus argues that the Titans' Olympian rivals are 'fated to excel' (II, 214) them in all areas of perfection, beauty, and growth. Oceanus

⁸⁰ O'Neill, 'Writing and History in *Hyperion*', p. 227.

undermines any comfort he is attempting to give. Like the surgeon, Oceanus's effort to understand suffering, further aggravates the wounds he suggests he can heal, compounding the Titans' 'woe extreme' (II, 242) by confirming their inability to advance in any way beyond the Olympian gods.

Enceladus and Collective Suffering

It is Enceladus who exposes Oceanus as both 'over-wise' (II, 309) and 'over-foolish' (II, 310), highlighting the narrowness of his approach to suffering by explaining that 'I scorn Oceanus's lore, / Much pain have I for more than loss of realms' (II, 333-334). As 'Sophist and Sage' (II, 168), Oceanus can be understood within the context of a person who is 'Wise, discreet, judicious',⁸¹ as well as 'One who makes use of fallacious arguments; a specious reasoner'.⁸² The 'murmuring' (II, 246) nature with which Oceanus begins and ends his speech intimates an embarrassment or lack of faith in the ability of his theory to provide any real alleviation of suffering. To abstract oneself from one's pain in order to contextualise it within a wider picture of progression is not a comfort for the Titans, but is met with the ambiguity of their 'guarded silence' (II, 245). Unlike Enceladus, who rouses the Titans 'spleens with so few simple words' (II, 321), the 'Guarded silence' which the Titans keep does not necessarily indicate that they are bearing their pain with the calm dispassion Oceanus proposes, but viewing his theory of suffering with either the proud 'poz'd conviction' (II, 244) or cold 'disdain' (II, 244) that the poet speaker suggests. As Newey continues to argue: 'Enceladus disputes Oceanus's philosophy not only by advocating a counter-revolution against the Olympians, but also by expressing a burden of feeling that cannot be simply rationalized or consoled'.⁸³ Enceladus has both Clymene's 'hectic lips' (II, 250) and Oceanus's murmuring philosophies in mind when he refers to the 'over-foolish' (II, 310). Oceanus's supposition is exposed as a fallacy that worsens pain. Reflecting on pain does not make sense of suffering, console feeling, or heal physical anguish, but 'agonize[s] me [Enceladus] more' (II, 314).

By the end of the second book, Keats's poetic focus is no longer on personal experiences of pain or the relationship between Saturn's identity and malady, but on the Titans' collective response to suffering. Holstein argues that 'though each speaker answers Saturn's call for help

⁸¹ 'Sage', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/169730>> [accessed 23/02/2016].

⁸² 'Sophist', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184755?redirectedFrom=sophist#eid>> [accessed 23/02/2016]. The same can also be said of Apollonius who is also called a 'sophist' in part II, line 172 in *Lamia*.

⁸³ Newey, 'Keats's Epic Ambitions', p. 74.

differently, each answer should be understood as complementing the others'.⁸⁴ Yet, Oceanus and Clymene's speeches are heard as monologues that articulate personal viewpoints and describe individual experiences of pain, wherein Clymene asks to 'let me tell my sorrow' (II, 259) and Oceanus reflects upon 'the young God of the Seas, / My dispossessor' (II, 332-333). It is Enceladus's speech that advances the Titans' debate. By engaging with the 'baby-words' (II, 314) of the other speakers, Enceladus's speech relocates the reader's attention away from Saturn's torment to the Titans' pain as a group of 'a thousand eyes / Wide glaring for revenge!' (II, 323-324). Saturn becomes a symbolic figure or a name behind which the other Titans rally:

There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, 'Saturn!'
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of 'Saturn!' (II, 387-391).

Whereas in the opening of the second book Keats centres on Saturn's bodily sickness and 'frailty of grief' (II, 93), in the closing lines it is 'the name of "Saturn!"' that is foregrounded. Saturn's name ostensibly brings the Titans together for a common cause, even as this polysyllabic word works to disrupt the metre and rhythm of the closing lines. Saturn's name creates a hyperbeat both in lines 388 and 391, disrupting the regular iambic pentameter of the blank verse by forming an unfinished foot that weakens the metre. Saturn's name scans as a trochee; a metrical foot that, in emphasising the first syllable of a word, carries a rhythmical weight that the iamb lacks. Yet, by placing the word 'Saturn' across two feet, Keats reverses this sense of linguistic force so that it is the unstressed syllable of Saturn's name that lingers in the reader's ear and is left suspended at the end of the line. Saturn's name appears to carry the potential for power as a word that is intended to bring the Titans together to form a force that might counteract the newfound power of the Olympians. Yet Keats demonstrates through poetic form that 'Saturn' is a word that weakens, deforms, and rings out emptily from 'hollow throats'. Saturn is reduced to no more than a spoken signifier bandied about between the four Titans: Enceladus, Iäpetus, Creüs, and Phorcus, who are situated at ground level and Hyperion who loudly responds from his peak. By geographically separating Hyperion from the four Titans, Keats establishes a call and response dynamic in which Hyperion's answer functions

⁸⁴ Holstein, 'The Poet- Healer and the Problem of Pain', pp. 45-46.

like an echo or a disembodied voice that reflects back to the fallen Titans their own words after a sonic delay. Much like Coelus, who is ‘but a voice’ (I, 340) and whose life is ‘but the life of winds and tides’ (I, 341), Keats renders Saturn as a substanceless name spoken upon the breaths of ‘hollow throats’ whose referent is unimportant. In almost every syllable of line 387, Keats uses the consonance, sibilance, and fricative alliteration of the unvoiced consonants ‘th’, ‘s’, ‘sh’, and ‘f’ in the words ‘there’, ‘those’, ‘four’, ‘shouted’, ‘forth’, and ‘Saturn’s’. The movement of air upon the tongue and between the teeth and lips as well as the audibility of the reader’s breath when line 387 is spoken aloud, draws our attention away from Saturn’s suffering and towards the oral and aural qualities of spoken language. In the same way that Coelus explains that ‘No more than winds and tides can I avail’ (I, 342), Saturn’s name can only affect the movement of wind or breath at the level of the spoken word. Unable to perform any bodily or concrete action to change the circumstances of the fallen Titans, Saturn returns to the silent, motionless, and joyless state of the opening tableau, relegated to the position of ‘Many a fallen old Divinity’ (III, 8); Saturn’s pain is no longer important, but one of ‘many’.

‘Wisdom is Folly’

Keats spends two books of *Hyperion* describing, discussing, and thinking through the significance and meanings of Saturn’s pain, only to leave the reader with the same image of a fallen Titan with ‘no joy’ (II, 390) and without identity, defined by suffering and the things he is not. Pain enables Saturn and the Titans to rise to ‘conceptual thinking’ in the way that Holstein proposes.⁸⁵ But the reader cannot define with any certainty the conclusions or knowledge that the Titans have attained. The closing image of Saturn leaves the reader with a lingering doubt that if pain propels the sufferer into a deeper level of understanding, then the trial of physical anguish and of bodies ‘horribly convulsed’ (II, 27) is not worth the progress one achieves. The poet speaker’s appeal to his Muse to ‘leave them [the Titans] to their woes’ (III, 3) at the beginning of the third book shows how in spite of the insight that pain has offered them, the Titans will remain haunted by their grief even beyond the poetic limits of the second book.

Published a year prior to *Hyperion* in 1818, Canto IV of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* reflects upon the ability of ‘griefs subdued’ (*CHP*, IV, 23. 199) to be recalled ‘with fresh bitterness

⁸⁵ Holstein, ‘The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain’, p. 46.

imbued' (*CHP* IV, 23. 201) by slight things.⁸⁶ For Byron, there are some wounds that cannot be healed but are renewed with ever-evolving freshness:

And how and why we know not, nor can trace
Home to its cloud this lightening of the mind,
But feel the shock renewed (*CHP* IV, 24. 208-210).

Alan Rawes argues: 'Childe Harold IV insists that thought offers a transcendence of, and refuge from [...] suffering'.⁸⁷ Yet these stanzas of Byron's poem propose that thought does not necessarily erase the horror that pain leaves behind. Instead, pain occurs without conscious thought and is experienced like a 'shock' by the feeling body. As a keen reader of Byron's 'pleasing woe' ('To Byron', 14) in his early poetic career,⁸⁸ Keats also remains open to the idea that pain does not always strengthen us, extending Byron's thinking by suggesting that thought actively brings about suffering. In his 3rd May 1818 letter to Reynolds, Keats draws upon *Manfred* to articulate a theory of suffering that comes to be tested in *Hyperion*: 'as Byron says, "Knowledge is Sorrow"; and I go on to say that "Sorrow is Wisdom" — and further for aught we can know for certainty! "Wisdom is folly"' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 279). Whereas Oceanus argues that experiencing truth straightforwardly as pain is 'folly' (II, 203), Keats draws upon Byron to revise this claim in his letter to Reynolds. To translate the experience of and meanings behind pain into a fixed philosophical maxim, in the same way as Oceanus, is a folly and limitation to the knowledge suffering can provide; the 'thought and musing' (II, 166) or philosophical wisdom that Oceanus is initially valued for does not alleviate Saturn's pain but 'agonize[s] [...] more' (II, 314). Keats leaves us with the final image of Saturn as 'a fallen old Divinity / Wandering about bewildered shores' (III, 8-9). Drawing upon the dual meanings of the word 'wandering', Keats not only presents Saturn aimlessly moving about among the Titans through lands he no longer controls or belongs in, but also continually questioning, analysing, or 'wandering about' the significance and causes of his pain. *Hyperion* finally refuses the

⁸⁶ Lord Byron, 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, pp. 19-206. All subsequent references to the text will be cited parenthetically.

⁸⁷ Alan Rawes, 'A More Beloved Existence' in *Byron's Poetic Experimentation: Childe Harold, the Tales, and the Quest for Comedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 117-138 (p. 137).

⁸⁸ For a wider discussion on the poetic relationship between Keats and Byron see William Keach, 'Byron Reads Keats' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 203-213; Christopher Ricks, 'Keats, Byron, and "Slippery Blissess"' in *Keats and Embarrassment*, pp. 69-114.

unalloyed pleasure of closure, leaving the reader, Saturn, and the Titans bewildered with the frustration of incomplete thought and understanding.

Chapter Three: ‘Ach[ing] to See’: Spectacles of Pain and Pleasure in *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes*

For Keats, thinking through the issue of suffering repeatedly involves the necessary burden of witnessing anguish from the perspective of an outside observer. *The Eve of St Agnes* and *The Fall of Hyperion* share this important preoccupation with spectatorship, the visual, and the visionary. Whereas *The Eve of St Agnes* is resplendent with ‘visions of delight’ (*Eve*, VI, 47), of ‘wreathèd pearls’ (*Eve*, XXVI, 227) and ‘jellies soother than the creamy curd’ (*Eve*, XXX, 266), *The Fall of Hyperion* details scenes of suffering, imaging faces ‘bright-blanchèd / By an immortal sickness’ (*Fall*, I, 257-258) and agonised bodies ‘deathwards progressing / To no death’ (*Fall*, I, 260-261). Central to both poems is a problematic relationship between external acts of spectatorship and the internal imaginings of dreams and visions. While observing suffering is a necessary and painful task for both the reader and the poet-dreamer in *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats presents scenes of suffering that also appeal to the pleasures of the visionary imagination. Keats remains attuned to the perverse experience of delight that underlies pathos, wherein imaginative pleasure threatens the seemingly disinterested, humanitarian impulse of sympathetic identification. As with Moneta, who is ambiguously positioned as both an unfeeling voyeur of suffering and a soothing voice of sympathy, Keats creates an unsettling proximity between those who sympathise with another’s suffering and those who find pleasure in spectacles of pain. In *The Eve of St Agnes*, Porphyro is also presented as a voyeur whose transgression is to gaze upon ‘St Agnes’ charmèd maid’ (*Eve*, XXII, 192) as she prays, undresses, and reposes in a dream-filled sleep, before melting into Madeline’s dream and performing ‘all the acts of a bonâ fide husband’ (*Letters: John Keats* II, 163). Jack Stillinger argues that Madeline is as much a victim of Porphyro’s deception as to the self-deception of a superstition she places too much trust in.¹ The reader is also seduced by ‘visions of delight’ (*Eve*, VI, 47) that stimulate the erotic imagination, but unlike Madeline we are made suspicious of such seduction and alert to the dangers of the ‘sable charm’ (*Fall*, I, 10) of poetic visions.

The Fall of Hyperion and *The Eve of St Agnes* leave the reader between states, making it impossible to differentiate between a poet’s dream and a fanatic’s illusion, the sympathetic gaze that ‘pours out a balm upon the world’ (*Fall*, I, 201) and the voyeuristic spectator who

¹ Jack Stillinger, ‘The Hoodwinking of Madeline: Skepticism in *The Eve of St Agnes*’ in *The Hoodwinking of Madeline And Other Essays on Keats’s Poems* (Urbana; London; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 67-93.

‘vexes it’ (*Fall*, I, 202). Read together, the poems reveal how Keats was deeply self-conscious about and mistrustful of poetic vision and spectatorship. Both poems force the reader to observe acts of observation in order to call attention to the problems and complexities that underlie the gaze of the characters, the reader, and the poet. Whereas *The Fall of Hyperion* spotlights how the observer can become problematically attracted to spectacles of suffering, *The Eve of St Agnes* makes the reader cautious of indulging in spectacles of pleasure. Yeats noticed how Keats made ‘Luxuriant song’ (‘Ego Dominus Tuus’, 67) from that which was ‘poor, ailing and ignorant’ (‘Ego Dominus Tuus’, 64), envisaging him as ‘a schoolboy [...] / With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window’ (‘Ego Dominus Tuus’, 60-61).² Keats places his characters and readers on the outside of pleasure, observing both ourselves and others transgressively gazing at objects of luxury that simultaneously contain that which might sicken into the ‘pallid, chill, and drear!’ (*The Eve of St Agnes*, 311). Keats makes the reader both attracted to and repelled by spectacles of pleasure and pain.

Sympathy, Speculation, and Spectatorship

Keats understood both sympathetic identification and the ‘speculative mind’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 80) as defining characteristics of the poet, remaining attuned to how the visual and visionary nature of each of these qualities was complexly ensnared in the poet’s ethical responsibilities. As a ‘camelion’, the poet’s personal identity was ‘annihilated’ and was ‘continually in for — and filling some other body’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 387), supposedly marking a movement away from the egotism of the artist’s mind and towards a sympathetic capacity to identify with the experiences of others through an act of imagination. *The Fall of Hyperion* sets forth Keats’s humanitarian desire for the physician poet to pour out a balm (*Fall*, I, 201) and lessen the sufferings of men by sympathetically feeling ‘the giant agony of the world’ (*Fall*, I, 157). And yet throughout the months he was composing and revising *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* in late 1818 and 1819, Keats’s letters suggest that such sympathetic capabilities were as much about delighting in the ‘dark side of things’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 387) as they were about feeling and relieving another’s pain. Alongside sympathy theorists such as Adam Smith and Edmund Burke, Keats identified how both viewing and visualising the tragedies and pains of others involved a problematic experience of delight on the part of the sympathiser. Burke argues that ‘we have a degree of delight [...] in the real misfortunes

² W. B. Yeats, ‘Ego Dominus Tuus’, *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright, Everyman ([1990] London: J. M. Dent, 1994), p. 211.

and pains of others' when their suffering is set at a distance because sympathy causes us to approach such objects rather than shun them.³ Keats sought to explore and interrogate the implication that sympathy was not a disinterested act that might ease another's pain, but a self-gratifying experience motivated by and embroiled in a pleasure-seeking imagination. The 27th October 1818 letter to Woodhouse describes a poetic character that:

enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated — It has as much delight conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387).

The visual nature of the sympathetic imagination is spotlighted here through images of darkness and brightness, light and shade, 'The Sun, the Moon' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387), and in the multiple meanings of the term 'speculation'. Wolfson has read 'speculation' as 'a conjectural effort that promotes an extension of thought',⁴ wherein Keats 'observe[s] or view[s] mentally' that which he takes pleasure in exploring,⁵ questioning, and hypothesising upon. Keats's diction suggests the poet's need for keenly focussed internal vision that is sensitive to the nuances of shade and colour and can image forth or conceive of that which the poet wishes 'to fill', identify with, and explore. The letter employs an optical language of 'light and shade' to point out the imagination's relishing of both good and bad, foul and fair, thereby placing vision in dialogue with poetic morality. To understand 'speculation' as an act of mental observation that promotes conjectural thinking supports Keats's sense that 'no harm' can be done from relishing in 'the dark side of things'. It is not morally reprehensible for the poet to identify with and indulge in the duplicity of an Iago because such enjoyment is confined to and distanced by the imagination, remaining abstracted and ungrounded in reality; it does not equate to a solipsistic enjoyment in physically observing the lived reality of another's suffering. The speculative mind that exists in a negatively capable state of conjecture refuses the

³ Edmund Burke, 'The Effects of Sympathy in the Distresses of Others' in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) (R. and J. Dodsley: Pall Mall, 1757) pp. 23-25. Burke defines 'delight' as 'the removal or moderation of pain', as opposed to a positive pleasure, which is entirely without sensations of suffering. Burke, 'Of Delight and Pleasure, as opposed to each other', p. 8.

⁴ Susan Wolfson, 'Keats the Letter-Writer: Epistolary Poetics', *Romanticism Past and Present*, 6 (1982), pp. 43-61 (p. 49).

⁵ 'Speculate, v.' in *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/186112?redirectedFrom=speculate#eid>> [accessed 17/09/2018].

certitudes of ethical maxims that demarcate the dark from the light, the good from the bad. And yet by evoking the phrase ‘foul and fair’ Keats recalls the three witches incantation from the opening of *Macbeth*: ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’ (*Macbeth*, 1.1.12).⁶ Through Shakespearean allusion, Keats seeks to establish an equality between good and bad, even as the letter’s references to notorious figures of duplicity, such as Iago and *Macbeth*, hint at a particular enthusiasm for Shakespearean villainy. The letter foregrounds Shakespearean drama to highlight the camelion poet’s enjoyment of visual scenes of the foul and mean, demonstrating a problematic passion for that which usually shocks the virtuous. As such, Keats’s evocation of the words ‘speculation’ and ‘speculative’ in the letters also retain their more obsolete definitions of: ‘The faculty or power of seeing, sight, vision’ and ‘a spectacle [...] spectacular entertainment’.⁷ Alongside the visuality of Keats’s wording, the term ‘speculation’ indirectly suggests that the poet’s sympathetic efforts might end in a problematic act of spectatorship in which the poet delights in spectacles of tragedy.

Lisa Heiserman Perkins points out how Keats’s use of ‘speculate’ was partly influenced by Hazlitt’s 1819 ‘Letter to Gifford’ in which he sets forth the ‘imagination’s “original Sin”’: its susceptibility to spectacle’.⁸ Quoting Hazlitt’s ‘Letter to Gifford’ in his 13th March 1819 correspondence with George and Georgiana, Keats thought through Hazlitt’s suggestion that the imagination delights in objects of power and excitement ‘in proportion to their strong and often tragical effect, and not in proportion to the good produced, or their desireableness in a moral point of view’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 75). Alongside J. Middleton Murray, Perkins argues that Keats shared in Hazlitt’s sense of the amorality of the poetic imagination whose speculations were not self-gratifying, but indicative of a ‘disinterested beholding’ of both good and bad.⁹ However, only six days later, on the 19th March 1819, Keats linked the ‘sinful’

⁶ William Shakespeare, ‘The Tragedy of *Macbeth*’ in *The Norton Anthology of Shakespeare*, 3rd ed., ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et. al (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 2721-2773.

⁷ ‘Speculation, n.’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/186113>> [accessed 17/09/2018].

⁸ Lisa Heiserman Perkins, ‘Keats’s Mere Speculations’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 43 (1994), pp. 56-74 (p. 65). That Keats also had Hazlitt in mind in his discussion of the camelion poet’s ‘speculations’ is evident from his evocation of the term ‘gusto’.

⁹ John Middleton Murray, ‘They End in Speculation’ in *Keats* (New York: Noonday Press, 1955), p. 229. It is in *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* that Hazlitt argues for the natural disinterestedness of the human mind. He proposes that we are ‘naturally interested in the welfare of others in the same way, and from the same direct motives, by which we are impelled to the pursuit of our own interest’ because it is through the imagination alone that we are ‘thrown forward’ into our own future beings in the same way the we are carried out of ourselves and into the feelings of others. William Hazlitt, *An Essay On the Principles of Human Action* (London: J. Johnson, 1805).

enjoyments of the imagination with the self-interested ‘Amusement’ of the ‘speculative mind’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 81):¹⁰

Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind [...] in the greater part of the Benefactors & to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness — some melodramatic scenery has fascinated them — From the manner in which I feel Haslam’s misfortune I perceive how far I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness — Yet this feeling ought to be carried to its highest pitch, as there is no fear of its ever injuring society— which it would do I fear pushed to an extremity (*Letters: John Keats II*, 79).

Reflecting on the imminent death of Haslam’s father, Keats remains self-aware of the limitations of his ability to enter into and feel his friend’s misfortune. For Keats, such an attempt at sympathetic feeling is ‘sullied’ by an ocular fixation with ‘melodramatic scenery’, preventing one from arriving at ‘any humble standard of disinterestedness’.¹¹ In the same way Burke argues that, ‘there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity’,¹² Keats’s letter hints at a dangerous fascination with and attraction to the spectacle of grief; a self-gratifying sentiment that ruins the ostensible disinterestedness of compassion. At once suggesting this this feeling of self-interestedness does no harm to others from being ‘carried to its highest pitch’, Keats simultaneously fears its injurious effects if pushed to ‘an extremity’. This contradiction remains conscious of what is at stake for the sympathiser whose altruism is not necessarily motivated by a wider regard for the sufferings of others, but by that which is ‘meretricious’, wherein the benefactors of humanity ‘prostitute’ the needy for the gratification of their own pleasures and the satisfaction of beholding

¹⁰ Porscha Fermanis reads Keats’s engagement with ‘disinterestedness’ in this letter alongside Keats’s letter to Bailey of 23rd January 1818 to show how ‘Keats argues that the reasons and motives for action – the “portion of good” and “spiritual yeast” that propel men to act – are natural and disinterested’. Fermanis rightly shows Keats’s indebtedness both to Hazlitt’s *Essays on the Principles of Human Action* and eighteenth-century moral philosophy, but she does not note Keats’s ambivalent attitude to man’s disinterestedness; a state which he also suggests ‘few men have ever arrived at’. Porscha Fermanis, ‘Moral Philosophy: Sympathetic Identification, Utility and the Natural History of Religion in The Fall of Hyperion’ in *John Keats and the Ideas of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 121-150 (p. 131).

¹¹ Keats evokes the term ‘disinterested’ in multiple and interrelated ways. For a fuller examination on Keats’s use of the word, as inherited from Hazlitt, see Jacques Khalip, ‘Virtual Conduct: Disinterested Agency in Hazlitt and Keats’, *ELH*, 73 (2006), pp. 885-912.

¹² Burke, ‘The Effects of Sympathy in the Distresses of Others’, p. 25.

themselves ‘doing the world some good’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387).¹³ And yet, at the same time, such a contradiction ironically exemplifies the disinterestedness of Keats’s mind, showing the speculative nature of a poet that remains ‘impartial [and] unbiased’,¹⁴ without awarding fixed authority to any one insight. Keats draws upon competing definitions of the term ‘speculate’ to show how the pleasures of internal and external sight both assist and threaten sympathy, even as he positions himself as a poet who is self-conscious of such gazing, ‘straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness — without knowing the bearing of any one assertion of any one opinion’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 80). Poetic ‘speculation’ becomes a guiding principle for Keats in the letters and poems of 1819.

‘Shadows of Melodious Utterance’

The induction to *The Fall of Hyperion* demonstrates the self-consciousness of Keats’s engagement with poetic vision, exploring the relationship between the external gaze of the reader and the internal dream-visions of the poet. The opening lines of the poem reveal the deeply visual and imagistic nature of Keats’s imagination, establishing the pictorial, mimetic art of weaving in relation to the dreaming mind as well as drawing upon the terms ‘dream’ (I, 1) and ‘vision’ (I, 14) interchangeably.¹⁵ Keats calls upon the reader to observe closely whether ‘the dream now purposed to rehearse / Be Poet’s or Fanatic’s’ (I, 16-17), spotlighting the power and responsibility of the reader’s gaze in dictating the meaningfulness of the poet’s imaginings upon the complex associations of actuality. However, throughout the opening lines, Keats creates an unclear distinction between the ‘sable charm’ (I, 10) of poetic vision and the ‘dumb enchantment’ (I, 11) of a fanatic’s dream:

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep

¹³ OED defines ‘meretricious, adj.’ as: ‘Of, relating to, or befitting a prostitute; having the character of a prostitute’. <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/116755?redirectedFrom=meretricious#eid>> [accessed 01/10/2018].

¹⁴ ‘Disinterested, adj. 2’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/54618?rskey=xlpEXJ&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 01/10/2018].

¹⁵ In her discussion of dream visions and the Romantic imagination, Anita O’Connell draws upon a wide range of philosophers, including Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, to show how, ‘Before the twentieth century, ideas, thoughts, and inspired moments were all thought to be visual, not linguistic’. Anita O’Connell, ‘Visions in Verse: Writing the Visual in Romantic Dream Visions’, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 48 (2015), pp. 35-54 (p. 35).

Guesses at Heaven; pity these have not
 Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
 The shadows of melodious utterance.
 But bare of laurel 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 enchantment
 (I, 1-11).

In 'Kubla Khan' (1816), Coleridge presents the speaker as both an inspired poet who experiences and articulates a dream-vision,¹⁶ as well as a madman or religious enthusiast whose unseeing, 'flashing eyes' ('Kubla Khan', 50) create 'holy dread' ('Kubla Khan, 52);¹⁷ a figure who is isolated from the realities of others by building and gazing at imagined pleasure-domes 'in air' ('Kubla Khan', 46). Keats similarly places the poet in close proximity to the seemingly deluded religious fanatic throughout *The Fall of Hyperion*. The induction presents fanatics and savages as having the same creative capabilities as the poet, possessing imaginations that can 'weave' (I, 1) and 'fashion' (I, 3). Like Keats's conception of the camelion poet, savages and fanatics are presented as possessing 'speculative minds' that use conjectural thinking to image forth an internal dream-vision of paradise or a Heaven from which the reader is excluded. Fanatics are presented as dreamers who Moneta comes to characterise as shut off from the world's miseries, contained within their own isolated 'haven [...] / Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days' (I, 150-151). Seeking to remove the poet from such irresponsible and mindless indulgence in imaginative pleasure, Keats establishes a tone of difference by describing what 'poesy' (I, 8) has that the fanatic's dream does not. Michael O'Neill rightly argues that 'The poem is never able to clarify its sense of the difference between the dreams of poet and fanatic'.¹⁸ But as Andrew Bennett notes: 'these important lines [of the Induction] are

¹⁶ Coleridge's full title for the poem is 'Kubla Khan Or, a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment'. In a letter to George and Georgiana, Keats writes of his accidental encounter with Coleridge on Hampstead Heath which occurred on 11th April 1819. Keats writes of how their conversation 'broached a thousand things' including: 'Different genera and species of Dreams — Nightmare — a dream accompanied <with> by a sense of touch — single and double touch — A dream related —' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 88-89). *The Fall of Hyperion* demonstrates Coleridge's ongoing influence on Keats's conceptualisation of poetic dream-visions.

¹⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan Or, a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment' in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge The Major Works*, ed. by H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 102-104.

¹⁸ O'Neill, 'Writing and History', 220.

effective precisely to the extent that their confusions are *not* elided'.¹⁹ Concerned that the visions of the imagination are no more than a meaningless illusion, the speaker attempts to differentiate the dreams of poets and fanatics by showing how it is through telling dreams and tracing internal visions upon paper that you 'can save / Imagination from the sable charm / And dumb enchantment' (I, 9-11). The written word is figured as mediating between internal and external vision, wherein Keats investigates how the visual signs of language might bestow a sensory reality to dreams. The opening spotlights 'vellum' and 'wild Indian leaf' (I, 5) as the canvases necessary for accommodating the written word, ending on a tangible image of the poet's writing-hand as a 'warm scribe' (I, 18). Keats's imagery rescues the poet from the abstracted, internal world of dream-visions even as it reduces him to a single body part that is figured as a mere copyist of a poetic vision from which it appears to be eerily dissociated. Keats identifies the poet as a scribe to state the necessity of writing down and thereby sharing dream-visions with the reader. But his indication that the written poem can only establish a vague 'trace' (I, 5) and shadow of 'melodious utterance' (I, 6) appears to restate the power of the spoken word over the written word. The written word may physically outlive the poet in the form of an inky outline upon paper, but it 'works at a remove' from the dream itself,²⁰ unable to capture the full intensity of the dreamer's original conception. The emphasis on words as a 'spell' (I, 9) or verbal incantation stresses the power of speech in manipulating the reader's experience of what is and is not real.²¹ Keats uses a magical diction to place the poet's 'Fine spell of words' (I, 9) on the same continuum as the fanatic's 'dumb enchantment' (I, 11), thereby implying that poetic language creates only the illusion that internal visions have the transforming power of Adam's dream from which Adam 'awoke and found it truth' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 185). More importantly, the induction contradicts its former claim that poets are distinguishable from fanatics through their ability to articulate their visions, arguing that all men who have 'been well nurtured in [their] mother tongue' (I, 15), including savages and fanatics, can speak their dreams. The oppositions, contradictions, and 'fine' (I, 9) subtleties of the induction show how Keats paradoxically commands poetic language in order to perform the written word's inability to articulate the intricate differences between the imaginative and linguistic abilities of poet and fanatic. The opening inscribes the power of poetic language through performing its failings.

¹⁹ Andrew Bennett, 'The "Hyperion" Poems' in *Keats, Narrative, and Audience: The Posthumous Life of Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 152.

²⁰ O'Neill, 'Writing and History', p. 220.

²¹ For a wider investigation on the relationship between incantations and reality, see Paul Endo 'Seeing Romantically in *Lamia*', *ELH*, 66 (1999), pp. 111-128.

While the written poem can only trace a dark visual echo or ‘shadow of melodious utterance’ (I, 6), it is Keats’s emphasis on speaking that maintains a separation between poet and fanatic. Control of the written word appears to distinguish the poet, enabling his dream-visions to live beyond the ‘tongue’ (I, 15) and ‘hand’ (I, 18) of the mortal body. Investigating Keats’s ‘Posthumous Life of Writing’, Bennett argues that the induction shows how the poet’s dream-visions ‘can only exist as poetry with the consent of its [future] audience’.²² Asking ‘Who alive can say, / “Thou art no Poet may’st not tell thy dreams?” (I, 11-12), Keats seems to confer power to future readers while relegating the poet to the position of a dead scribe. And yet the ambiguity of tone here, between earnest questioning and the sarcastic defiance of Byronic insincerity, stages a vacillation of power between the poet and the reader. As Bennett recognises, ‘the lines [also] allow no reading other than that mediated by’ the warm hand of the poet.²³ Controlling our gaze at all times, Keats’s final image of the poet’s ‘living hand’ (‘This Living Hand’, 1) creates a lasting visual impression on the reader, wherein the visceral depiction of a dismembered body part disturbingly foregrounds its warmth, hinting at the blood still coursing in its veins and suggesting its capacity to live independently from the dead writer’s body. Further, when aligned with the depiction of the poet as ‘scribe’, such a gothic image can also be understood as indicative of the poet’s handwriting, drawing attention back to the visuality of the written word. Through the pen, the ‘warm and capable’ (‘The Living Hand’, 1) hand of the living poet reclaims poetic authority from beyond the grave, transforming internal visions into external visual symbols that survive beyond the poet’s corporeality to be re-experienced upon the pulses and re-imagined in the minds of future readers. This way dream-visions, when translated into the written word, are able to bestow an alternative, posthumous reality to the poet via the minds and bodies of readers. Keats investigates how the internal visions of the dreamer-poet are conveyed to the experiential reality of the reader, and in turn how the internal visions and imaginings of the reader are prompted by the experiential reality of the poet’s ‘warm hand’ (I, 18). Keats argues that ‘Nothing ever comes real till it is experienced’ (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 81), and it is through transmitting the poet’s dream to the visionary experiences of the reader by means of the written word that he attempts to realise the poet’s imaginings.

²² Bennett, ‘The “Hyperion” Poems’, p. 153.

²³ Bennett, ‘The “Hyperion” Poems’, p. 151.

'So Fine, so Subtle, Felt the Tyranny'

It is this focus on how internal imaginings are stimulated by observing another's felt reality that is central to Keats's engagement with sympathy throughout the *Hyperion* poems. Keats stalls the *Hyperion* narrative in book III after a problematic moment of sympathetic spectatorship between Apollo and Mnemosyne. Attempting to establish the Olympian God as a 'fresh perfection' (*Hyperion*, II, 212) in the 'grand march of intellect' (*Letters: John Keats* 1, 282), Keats presents Apollo as a divinity that 'read[s]' (*Hyperion*, III, 111) suffering, contrasting him with Hyperion as a deity that only watches and 'behold[s] [...] horrors new' (*Hyperion*, I, 233) and 'effigies of pain' (*Hyperion*, I, 228). Rather than abandoning his own concerns to feel in league with his fellow Titans, Hyperion's proleptic 'ache' (*Hyperion*, I, 176) is self-centred. Stating 'Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall? / Am I to leave this haven of my rest [?]' (*Hyperion*, I, 234-235), Hyperion imagines what is to befall himself by means of viewing the pain of the fallen Titans, regarding the suffering of others so as to anticipate those pleasures and privileges he will personally lose:²⁴ 'glory', 'calm luxuriance', 'crystalline pavilions', 'pure fanes', a 'lucent empire' (*Hyperion*, I, 236-239). Wanting to cling to his title and riches, Hyperion only bends 'His spirit to the sorrow of the time' (*Hyperion*, I, 301) upon realising that looking to communal woe is the only way to cure his own suffering. In contrast, Apollo is presented as a God with a scrutinising gaze (*Hyperion*, III, 80). Longing to shed the 'painful vile oblivion [that] seals' his eyes (*Hyperion*, III, 87), Apollo wishes to understand 'other regions' (*Hyperion* III, 96) than his own and achieves an agonised deification as the god of poetry through reading in Mnemosyne's 'silent face' (*Hyperion*, III, 112) the painful truth of 'Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions, / Majesties, sovran voices, agonies, / Creations and destroyings' (*Hyperion*, III, 114-116). Through reading with 'enkindlèd eyes' (*Hyperion*, III, 121), Apollo appears to feel sympathetically the torments of existence 'pour into the wide hollows of [...] [his] brain' (*Hyperion*, III, 117). And yet Keats's brief cataloguing of 'knowledge enormous' (*Hyperion*, III, 113) struggles to support the 'prodigious [...] toil' (*Fall*, I, 121) involved in 'the artist's need to suffer his poem's subject'.²⁵ Apollo detects Mnemosyne's 'wondrous lesson' (*Hyperion*, III, 112) in a fleeting moment of comprehension

²⁴ Hyperion's self-regarding anticipation of pain comes troublingly close to Adam Smith's definition of sympathy that argues that sympathy is an imaginative experience that cannot take you beyond your own experiential reality. Smith proposes that we look at the suffering of others to imagine how our own minds and bodies would feel if we were in a like situation. In *Hyperion*, Keats interrogates such a notion to reveal a potential solipsism that undermines the supposedly selfless impulse of the sympathiser. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 2.

²⁵ O'Neill, 'Writing and History', p. 226.

before undergoing a quasi-orgasmic dying into life (*Hyperion*, III, 130);²⁶ a *petit mort* or pleasure in pain that points sympathy back towards what is to be gained through suffering: for Apollo, an acquisition of divine knowledge and power. Keats breaks off the *Hyperion* narrative upon recognising the problem of pleasurable pain which privileges the Apollonian ecstasy of ‘knowledge enormous’ (*Hyperion*, III, 113) without detailing the specific nuances of how Apollo’s gazing equates to feeling sympathetically the torments endured by others.²⁷ Apollo’s vision becomes unclearly differentiated from Hyperion’s looking; both ways of seeing are figured teleologically as acts of viewing that are motivated by personal desire.²⁸

The Fall of Hyperion shifts the reader’s gaze away from the pleurably ‘fierce convulse’ (*Hyperion*, III, 129) of immortals and towards human suffering.²⁹ Keats replaces the god of poetry with the distinctly human poet-dreamer, who both looks upon and experiences pain as an arduous task that he must work through, rather than something that is momentarily undergone. Commanded by Moneta to ascend the immortal steps of Saturn’s altar ‘or die on that marble step where thou art’ (*Fall*, I, 108), the poet-dreamer encounters pain as a sensation that is inflicted upon him by a superior presence, experiencing bodily suffering straightforwardly as an incontrovertible ‘sharp anguish’ (*Fall*, I, 126), rather than a quasi-orgasmic pleasure. And yet, Keats not only positions the reader alongside Moneta as a voyeur who indulges in another’s suffering, but also uncomfortably spotlights how imagining and anticipating pain involves a perverse experience of pleasure, both for the reader and the poet-dreamer himself:

I heard, I looked: two senses both at once,

²⁶ Many critics, including Michael O’Neill, Vincent Newey, and Stuart M Sperry, interpret Apollo’s painfully pleasurable transformation in the terms of sexual climax. O’Neill, ‘Writing and History’, p. 230; Vincent Newey, ‘Hyperion, The Fall of Hyperion, and Keats’s Epic Ambitions’, pp. 78-80; Sperry, ‘Tragic Irony: *The Fall of Hyperion*’, p. 312.

²⁷ Timothy Zeigenhagen argues that ‘“Though Apollo’s knowledge may be felt and painful in its assimilation, it is not proven through direct experience and therefore remains in the realm of the abstract”. Zeigenhagen, ‘Keats, Professional Medicine, and the Two Hyperions’, pp. 301-302.

²⁸ O’Neill also notices how Keats’s self-consciousness of poetic gazing creates a proximity between Hyperion and Apollo. He argues that ‘Hyperion serves as a poetic alter ego as much as Apollo’, proposing that Keats is haunted by ‘the thought of a gaze that is open-lidded, steady, aware of the need for a patience equal to that of the “bright, patient stars”’. To the degree that he assumes such a gaze Hyperion is allowed a glimmer of godlike understanding’. O’Neill, ‘Writing and History’, pp. 226-227. By book III, Apollo’s gaze is anything but patient, instead acquiring godlike insight in a short-lived, passing moment of comprehension.

²⁹ Critics, including Sperry, Stillinger, and Fermanis have frequently noted how Keats shifts his focus away from the pain of fallen divinities and towards the poet’s engagement with humanitarian concerns. Stillinger writes, ‘while some of the lines of *Hyperion* do touch on the agonies and strife of human hearts, the bulk of the fragment fundamentally does not’. Stillinger, ‘“The Heart and Nature of Man” in *Hyperion, Lamia, and The Fall of Hyperion*’ in *The Hoodwinking of Madeline*, pp. 46-66 (p. 52).

So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
 Of that fierce threat, and the hard task proposed.
 Prodigious seemed 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
 Upon those streams that pulse beside the throat.
 I shrieked; and the sharp anguish of my shriek
 Stung my own ears — (*Fall*, I, 118-127).

Clouded in ‘white fragrant curtains’ (I, 106) of burning incense, Moneta pronounces a ‘fierce threat’ (I, 120) of ‘Language’ (I, 107) from an unseen and veiled position. The speaker hears and looks at the same time, but his seeing amounts to a lack of visual data and a searching out for an object to which he can attach such threatening, disembodied utterance. Moneta is initially presented as a mysterious and sublime presence whose ‘tyranny’ (I, 119) not only stems from the prospect of violence that underlies her words, but also a panopticon-like authority that entitles her to see without being seen. Laura Hinton argues that ‘sympathy is implicated as a particularly perverse, panopticon strategy’,³⁰ involving the moral authority of a hidden spectator who is moved by images of suffering. Drawing upon David Hume’s *Treatise Concerning Human Understanding* (1739-40), Hinton shows how such morality is undermined by the sympathiser’s desire for visual pleasure, arguing that ‘sympathy invariably generate[s] sadistic voyeuristic pleasure in the name of identification’.³¹ Lines 118 to 127 both anticipate and move beyond Hinton’s analysis. Like Moneta, the reader is paradoxically spotlighted as a hidden figure whose visualisation of suffering is as likely to evoke sadistic enjoyment as it is to create an identification with and vicarious experience of suffering. But the lines also encourage such sadistic, scopophilic gazing at the same time as they describe the poet-dreamer’s masochistic enjoyment in the ‘tyranny’ (I, 119) of being watched and threatened by a ‘fierce’ (I, 120) presence that he cannot see. At this point in the poem, Keats establishes a

³⁰ Laura Hinton, ‘Introduction. The Failed Mirror of Sympathy’ in *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy Sadomasochistic Sentiments from Clarissa to Rescue 911* (New York: State University of New York, 1999), pp. 1-34 (p. 16). Whereas philosophers such as Locke argue that virtue is an innate or natural instinct that guides sympathy and which man is born with, Hume suggests that morality is governed by the passions and is consequently capricious. Hinton shows how Hume’s emphasis on the pleasures of spectatorship reveals how sympathy is dependent on the whims of what the individual desires and finds pleasurable. Hinton, ‘The Failed Mirror of Sympathy’, pp. 19-20.

³¹ Hinton, ‘The Failed Mirror of Sympathy’, p. 32.

sadomasochistic power dynamic between the observer and the observed that threatens sympathetic feeling. In his discussion of sympathy, Burke points out how the imagination can work both to distance the observer from another's suffering, as well as bring them into closer contact with it; an idea that Keats investigates in *Hyperion*. When danger and pain are set at 'certain distances and with certain modifications', Burke argues that they are delightful.³² Observing pain is not repugnant when such suffering is modified by and filtered through the imagination. And yet Burke also indicates that the apprehension of pain and death produces fear, wherein the idea or prospect of hurt 'operates in a manner that resembles actual pain'.³³ In *The Fall of Hyperion*, the poet-dreamer does not straightforwardly experience fear as a result of Moneta's death-threat in the way the reader might expect. Instead, the expectation of suffering becomes an imaginative pleasure. When his suffering is anticipated, the poet-dreamer is attracted to Moneta's tyranny, feeling her threat as 'fine' and 'subtle' (I, 119) and using the anaphoric repetition of 'so' in line 119 to express a luxuriating in the intensity of despotic power. Momentarily removed from 'sharp anguish' (I, 126), the poet-dreamer imagines his imminent pain and the 'hard task proposed' (I, 120) as something that seems 'prodigious' (I, 121); an adjective that intermingles a desirable feeling of wonder and astonishment with that which appals and repulses.³⁴ Keats has the poet-dreamer relish the minute details of how the powerful, 'large utterance' (I, 353) of an immortal feels upon his mind and body, before making his own 'fine spell of words' (I, 9) force the reader into similarly indulging in how each separate part of the poet-dreamer's anatomy is effected by 'a palsied chill' (I, 122). Keats recasts the sensation of coldness in visual terms by paradoxically describing it as an invisible, almost supernatural presence that possesses physical movement and the power of touch. The reader's eye is made to follow the ascension of this 'suffocating' (I, 130) numbness upwards from the 'paved level' (I, 123) and through each limb, wherein the poet-dreamer's pathology is described almost as a distinct alien presence that enters and possesses his body through the temple floor, touching him with 'cold grasp' (I, 124); an image that recalls and opposes the opening depiction of the poet's 'warm hand' (I, 18). *The Fall of Hyperion* begins by stating the importance of translating dreams into visual signifiers to be read and judged by future

³² Burke, 'Of the Sublime' in *Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 14.

³³ Burke, 'Terror' in *Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 42. Burke expands upon this idea in section IV, 'Causes of Pain and Fear'. He argues that fear exhibits the same effects as actual pain, but proposes that 'pain operate on the mind, by the intervention of the body; whereas things that cause terror [or fear] generally affect the bodily organs by the operation of the mind suggesting the danger', p. 123.

³⁴ 'Prodigious. 2 (a)', *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/151951?redirectedFrom=prodigious#eid>> [accessed 18/10/2018].

audiences. Here, Keats makes the reader watch as the poet-dreamer fights for his poetic life, wrestling between the ‘cold grasp’ (I, 124) of the grave and the ‘warm and capable’ (‘This Living Hand’, 1) hand of the poet who must earn his posthumous existence. Keats forces the reader to visualise how pain effects individual parts of the human body, providing the reader with an anatomically specific image of the carotid arteries in line 125,³⁵ correctly locating them ‘beside the throat’ (I, 125), and depicting them as pulsing ‘streams’ (I, 125). Such a metaphor draws upon a well-established medical diction surrounding blood circulation at the same time as it beautifies and aestheticises an image usually associated with the horror of blood and gore.³⁶ Keats exposes the poet’s fictionalisation of human suffering and the ways in which pain is made more palatable for the reader. As with the 27th October 1818 letter to Woodhouse, Keats implicates the poet in the ethically questionable act of making the foul fair and attractive. The staccato of caesurae that punctuate lines 118-121, for example, work to contrast with the enjambement of lines 122 and 125, not only emphasising an increase in pace that mimics the sudden and ‘quick’ (I, 124) movement of a deadly pathogen through the poet-dreamer’s body, but also forcing the reader’s gaze to hurry from line to line, avidly moving ahead to the next image. Keats’s syntax encourages the rapid movement of the eye across the page as the reader attempts to gain a complete visual impression of the scene, thereby compelling us to notice our desire to look at the suffering body. In *Justine Or, the Misfortunes of Virtue* (1791), Sade employs voyeurism to implicate his ostensibly virtuous heroine in the depravities of libertinism. Justine describes how she has watched her custodian, the sadistic surgeon and schoolmaster Rodin, gazing upon a young, weeping, and dishevelled schoolgirl who he has tied to a post, noting how he is ‘inflamed by it’ (*Justine*, 161).³⁷ Hidden and watching from the next room, Justine admires the schoolgirl’s white, beautiful, and exposed loins as ‘roses stripped of their leaves by the hands of the very Graces’ (*Justine*, 161), as well as describing the girl’s tears as ‘bathing one of the sweetest, most beautiful faces’ (*Justine*, 161). Justine demonstrates her own attraction to the body in distress before ironically asking: ‘Who was the monster that could find pleasure in the sight of tears and pain?’ (*Justine*, 161).³⁸ In the same way Justine’s voyeurism destabilises her role as the virtuous victim of libertinism, dramatising her inability

³⁵ Other critics have also noticed Keats’s anatomically specific reference to the carotid arteries in line 125, including Paul D. Sheats in ‘Stylistic Discipline in “The Fall of Hyperion”’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 17 (1968), pp. 75-88 (p. 81).

³⁶ In *A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation, and Gun-Shot Wounds*, John Hunter refers to the blood as a stream.

³⁷ Marquis de Sade, *Justine or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, ed. by Alan Hull Walton (London: Neville Spearman Ltd, 1964).

³⁸ Justine watches 9 children, male and female, physically and sexually abused by Rodin before declaring her horror and chastising his excesses (at the same time as she fails to notice her own).

to look away from the suffering body and making her complicit in Rodin's sadistic abuses, Keats similarly manipulates language so as to appeal to the visionary imagination, incriminating the reader by forcing us to enjoy that which is usually repugnant.

'Scenes / Still Swooning Vivid'

Moneta and the poet-dreamer also vacillate between interrelated roles, shifting from the observer to the observed, the sympathiser to the sympathised with, the controlling to the controlled. Keats not only spotlights how the reader's external eye is continually moving across the physical page of the text. He also makes it impossible for the reader's interpretive gaze to remain stable or fixed. Keats blurs the boundaries between different ways of seeing, wherein external sight and internal vision become indistinguishable. Moneta ostensibly establishes 'clear-cut distinction[s]' between poets,³⁹ dreamers, and humanists at the same time as she conflates and confuses their terms, alerting the poet-dreamer to the instability of his poetic identity. Similarly, the goddess is also ambiguously positioned in multiple roles that in turn work to destabilise the 'tribe' (I, 198) to which the poet-dreamer is said to belong. Initially identified as a tyrant, Moneta is also depicted as a mocking and indifferent spectator of pain who derisively asks, 'What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe, / To the great world?' (I, 167-168),⁴⁰ as well as a 'courteous' (I, 215) and maternal presence (I, 250), with a 'sooth voice' (I, 155), who unknowingly provides comfort to those who gaze upon her, but whom 'she sees not' (I, 270). Helen Vendler argues that Moneta 'assumes toward the poet a role combining both the sternness of male authority and the tenderness of maternal solicitude'.⁴¹ But Moneta evokes such solicitude and compassion in others when placed under the commanding and questioning presence of the poet-dreamer. According to Hinton, the scopophilic sympathiser is:

a sentimental figure who defuses but also reasserts power and control. [...] a gazer who is both controlling and controlled. He is a symbolic subject who is both seeing and unseen.⁴²

³⁹ Stillinger, "'The Heart and Nature of Man'", p. 61. For a full exploration of the nuances and progress of Moneta's argument on the differences and confusions between poets, dreamers, and humanists in lines 147-181 and lines 189-210, see pp. 61-64 of Stillinger's chapter.

⁴⁰ Stillinger also notes how Moneta treats poet-dreamers scornfully in this passage. Stillinger, "'The Heart and Nature of Man'", p. 63.

⁴¹ Vendler, 'The Dark Secret Chambers: *The Fall of Hyperion*' in *The Odes of John Keats*, pp. 191-226 (p. 209).

⁴² Hinton, 'The Failed Mirror of Sympathy', p. 5.

In *The Fall of Hyperion*, the poet-dreamer reclaims authority by rendering Moneta a weeping subject to be gazed upon both by himself and the reader, before forfeiting this power by aching to see, feel, and be shaped by Moneta's 'immortal sickness' (I, 258). Until line 256, Moneta remains veiled and partially visible, observable only as a 'Majestic shadow' (I, 211) and a 'tall shade' (I, 216) so that it is through the inner eye that the poet-dreamer gains a complete visual impression of the goddess. Keats extends Hinton's suggestion to show how the power and control that the sympathiser asserts over the sympathised with is achieved through internal and external gazing. Directing Moneta to 'tell me where I am' (I, 211), who he is speaking to, and what 'image' (I, 213) he looks upon, the poet-dreamer prompts the goddess's mournful response: 'by her voice I knew she shed / Long-treasured tears' (I, 220-221).⁴³ As with the speaker of 'Ode to a Nightingale' who 'guess[es] each sweet' from 'embalmèd darkness' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 43), Keats repeatedly presents moments where hearing provides access to the visual by means of the imagination. The poet-dreamer is able to glimpse Moneta's tears by paying close attention to the nature of her 'earnest' (I, 217) voice, detecting long-endured woe that hints at her 'wan face / [...] bright-blanchèd / By an immortal sickness' (I, 256-258). With a sorrowful voice, the goddess tells the poet-dreamer how 'scenes' (I, 244) of the Titans' fall are 'Still swooning vivid through my globèd brain, / With an electral changing misery' (I, 245-246). Moneta reveals herself as a sympathetic presence who feels the Titans's suffering with such intensity that she beholds the memory of their fall within her mind with as much reality and immediacy as the perceptions of the external eye. The acuteness of the visionary imagination is presented in medical terms and with anatomical accuracy. Momentarily filtering the narrative through the physician's gaze, Keats describes the 'globed' or spherical shape of the brain as well as the nature of its functions, drawing upon his medical reading and his own experiences of dissecting cadavers at the united hospitals.⁴⁴ Keats evokes the anatomical illustrations of Gall and Spurzheim, who had pinpointed exactly how the 'dark secret chambers' (I, 278) of the brain looked,⁴⁵ as well as the electrophysiological experiments of

⁴³ For a full investigation of the ways in which Moneta is linked with 'treasure', artistic creation and commodity in the 'realms of gold', and Keats's financial concerns, see K. K. Ruthven, 'Keats and "Dea Moneta"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 15 (1976), pp. 445-459. Ruthven takes dea Moneta's role as Goddess of the Roman mint to argue that in *The Fall of Hyperion* she 'instill[s] in the young poet a proper respect for the harsh realities of life' (p. 446).

⁴⁴ Donald Goellnicht also notes how Keats's returns to the globed or spheroidal shape of the brain throughout *The Fall of Hyperion* were informed by his knowledge of anatomy and physiology, noting how Keats was influenced by the phrenology of Gall and Spurzheim. Goellnicht, 'Anatomy and Physiology' in *The Poet Physician*, pp.141-144.

⁴⁵ Richardson extensively explores how images of 'the spectacular brain' emerged in late eighteenth-century medicine, noting how 'The scientific picture of the central nervous system had been revolutionized in the decade preceding Keats's medical training not only by Bell's "new anatomy," but by the controversial yet also influential

scientists such as Galvani, Hunter, and Bell who had shown how ‘electral’ (I, 246) nerve transmission was responsible for animation and sensation. For Moneta, the memory of the Titans’ fall stimulates the same electrophysiological reactions in the nervous system as those produced by external observation, wherein the brain sends and receives neural signals that trigger constant and ever-changing sensations of pain and ‘misery’ (I, 145). As Alan Richardson writes, Moneta’s brain ‘is at once theater and womb, a site of “electral” activity and constant development’.⁴⁶ Moneta’s ‘spherèd words’ (I, 249) carefully articulate the effects of sympathetic feeling on her physiology, providing a tantalising glimpse into the workings of her brain and her experience of suffering. Keats points out how observing those who sympathise with the pain of others becomes a source of sympathy in itself so that Moneta comes to occupy the positions of sympathiser and sympathised with at the same time.

Yet it is not necessarily the workings of Moneta’s ‘globèd brain’ (I, 245) that sparks the poet-dreamer’s interest at this moment in the poem. Moneta describes the imagistic nature of her mind without detailing the specific scenes ‘swooning’ (I, 245) within it. Keats promises to let both the reader and poet-dreamer behold with ‘dull mortal eyes’ (I, 247) what ‘ferments to and fro’ (I, 290) in Moneta’s brain, but suspends such details for another 42 lines of the poem so that, alongside the poet-dreamer, the reader aches to see (I, 276) the mournful events that Moneta describes. Keats shows how listening to another’s sorrow does not straightforwardly provoke sympathy, but also sparks a problematic curiosity in that which causes pain:

I ached to see what things the hollow brain
 Behind enwombèd; what high tragedy
 In the dark secret chambers of her skull
 Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
 To her cold lips, and fill with such light
 Her planetary eyes; and touch her voice
 With such a sorrow (I, 276-282).

[phrenological] work of Gall and Spurzheim’. Richardson, ‘Keats and the Glories of the Brain’, p. 118. In 1810, Gall and Spurzheim produced an *Atlas* of the brain, which collected together detailed anatomical illustrations (some of which can be found in Richardson’s monograph).

⁴⁶ Richardson, ‘Keats and the Glories of the Brain’, p. 149.

Ellen Brinks argues that Keats's emphasis on seeing and engaging with pain in the *Hyperion* poems at times 'unleashes a disturbingly antisymphathetic response. [...] Keats evokes distaste, even aversion: affective responses that check sympathy'.⁴⁷ While Moneta's revelation of her 'deathwards progressing' (I, 260) and 'wan face' (I, 256) sparks the poet-dreamer's desire to flee, it is the goddess's 'planetary eyes' (I, 281) and the mysterious ways in which she sees that continue to engage his interest. What unleashes an antisymphathetic response at this moment in the poem is not straightforwardly repulsion, but attraction to pain and disease. Listening to the 'dread [...] stress' (I, 279) and 'sorrow' (I, 282) of Moneta's voice does not evoke a desire in the poet-dreamer to 'pour out a balm' (I, 201) upon the goddess's suffering as the reader might expect. Instead, it triggers a problematic curiosity and a cruel longing to stare at that which torments the mind of the goddess. Keats shows how spectatorship does not so much necessitate sympathy as threaten it. As Susan Sontag writes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*: 'images of the repulsive can [...] allure. Everyone knows that what slows down highway traffic going past a horrendous car crash is not only curiosity. It is also, for many, the wish to see something gruesome'.⁴⁸ It is this wish to satisfy a visual curiosity with the gruesome that becomes a painfully pleasurable ache in the poem; a curiosity that Keats aligns with the suspense and titillation of theatrical spectacle. Through the eyes of the poet-dreamer, Moneta's mournful accents threaten to become no more than a staged performance of a 'high tragedy' (I, 277), 'acting' (I, 279) within the 'globèd' (I, 245) theatre of the goddess's mind for the entertainment of the spectator. The poet-dreamer's longing to observe the scenes in Moneta's skull does not necessarily point to a desire to share in Moneta's suffering, but a self-gratifying wish to behold a theatrical spectacle of tragedy.

'To See as a God Sees'

It is the experience of feeling through seeing that is presented as a divine and ideal symphathetic power in *The Fall of Hyperion*. Throughout the poem, Keats makes immortal seeing an enigma to both the reader and the poet-dreamer. At times Moneta's powers of observation are astute and sensitive. She perceives subtle visual cues from the poet-dreamer, unveiling herself after observing his awe and terror. And yet, upon beholding Moneta's face, the poet-dreamer describes the goddess as having eyes that 'seemed' (I, 267) to be 'visionless entire' (I, 267) so that it is uncertain whether Moneta beholds events with the external eye in the same way as

⁴⁷ Ellen Brinks, 'The Male Romantic Poet as Gothic Subject: Keats's *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*: A Dream', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 54 (2000), pp. 427-454 (p. 440).

⁴⁸ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 85.

mortals. By the end of the first book, internal and external vision merge. The poetic narrative presents multiple dreams within dreams, culminating in the replaying of the fall of the Titans which the poet-dreamer observes as an outside observer from within the workings of Moneta's 'globèd brain' (I, 245). The poet-dreamer ostensibly sees through Moneta's 'planetary eyes' (I, 281):

[...] Whereon there grew
 A power within me of enormous ken
 To see as a God sees, and take the depth
 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-unravellèd web (I, 302-308).

The Fall of Hyperion presents spectatorship as a threat to sympathy, wherein viewing the other in pain is as likely to stimulate an unethical and perverse visual pleasure as identification with another's suffering. Here, 'To see as a God sees' (I, 304) appears to transcend such a problem, wherein observing with the 'outward eye' (I, 305) is tantamount to comprehending the 'depth / Of things' (I, 304-305), knowing the complexities of the world's suffering and feeling it sympathetically through the act of looking. Beholding the 'eternal quietude' (I, 390) and 'unchanging gloom' (I, 391) of Saturn and Thea leaves the poet-dreamer 'gaunt and ghostly' (I, 396) and 'gasping with despair' (I, 398) so that he comes to resemble and sympathetically feel the same 'immortal sickness' (I, 258) as Moneta. By seeing with Moneta's 'planetary eyes' (I, 281), the poet-dreamer seems to reveal how the goddess's previous experience of watching his own suffering on the altar steps did not amount to a tyrannical and sadistic voyeurism. Instead, Moneta would have felt in tandem with the poet-dreamer's anguish. And yet Vendler's observation that, 'the poet's depth-vision is that he is stricken by Moneta's own illness' also reveals the limitations of the poet-dreamer's capacity to identify with the Titans' suffering.⁴⁹ Keats dilutes the poet-dreamer's engagement with Saturn's pain by having him feel in league with Moneta who in turn identifies with the Titans; the poet-dreamer retains 'dull mortal eyes' (I, 247) that are two steps removed from Titanic anguish. Lines 302-308 subtly undermine the implication that the poet-dreamer has achieved God-like sight, wherein the 'web' (I, 308) of

⁴⁹ Vendler, 'Dark Secret Chambers', p. 223.

complex emotions, pains, and losses that the Titans experience remains only ‘half-unravelling’ (I, 308) and partially available to the poet-dreamer’s understanding. Keats’s depiction of God-like sight continues to focus on ‘size and shape’ (I, 306), pointing the poetic narrative back towards the external act of spectatorship. As with *Hyperion*, the poet-dreamer continues to stand ‘side by side’ (I, 292) with Moneta, positioned above the Titans’ narrative ‘Deep in the shady sadness of a vale’ (I, 294). Placed before a ‘lofty theme’ (I, 306), the poet-dreamer remains an outside observer to the spectacle of another’s suffering.

‘Dumb Orat’ries’

The Fall of Hyperion triangulates the reader’s gaze by making us watch acts of spectatorship, wherein we see the ‘Degraded, cold’ (*Fall*, I, 322) and motionless Titans by means of observing the gaze of Moneta and the poet-dreamer. *The Eve of St Agnes* draws attention to such unseen presences by staging multiple layers of hiddenness: the reader is positioned as an observer who watches Porphyro as he watches Madeline from the hidden space of her bedchamber closet. *The Eve of St Agnes* was written between 18th January and 2nd February 1819, at a midpoint between Keats’s composition of *Hyperion* in late 1818 and his revision of this earlier work in *The Fall of Hyperion* between mid-July and September 1819.⁵⁰ Greg Kucich revises Walter Jackson Bate’s suggestion that Keats,

took up *The Eve of St Agnes* as a brief escape from hardship into a Spenserian bower of luxury, a pause to distance himself from the tragedy of his brother Tom’s recent death and the disappointment of the *Hyperion* experience before returning to more serious work.⁵¹

Kucich rightly proposes that Keats returned to Spenser’s luxurious pictorialism not straightforwardly to escape tragic hardship, but to establish and explore ‘densely juxtaposed

⁵⁰ John Barnard explains how *Hyperion* was ‘mainly written between late September 1818 and the death of Tom on 1st December 1818’, before being abandoned in April 1819. Barnard notes how books I and II of *Hyperion* were substantially finished by December and that the poem’s genesis certainly preceded *The Eve of St Agnes*, which was suggested to him by Isabella Jones. Importantly, Keats made substantial revisions to *The Eve of St Agnes* in September 1819, when *The Fall of Hyperion* was fresh in his mind, including the stanzas in which Porphyro ‘melts’ into Madeline’s dream. ‘[Explanatory] Notes for [*Hyperion. A Fragment*] pp. 282-3’ in *John Keats The Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard (London: Penguin Group, 1973), p. 633.

⁵¹ Greg Kucich, ‘So Continuing Long’ in *Keats, Shelley, & Romantic Spenserianism* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 185-239 (p. 199).

pictures of the mind' in various cognitive and affective states.⁵² *The Eve of St Agnes* can be understood as a key stage of development in Keats's investigation of the relationship between pain, pleasure, and the poetic gaze throughout this concentrated period of poetic composition. In *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats focusses on how scopophilic pleasure threatens the reader's sympathetic capabilities by spotlighting our enjoyment of spectacles of pain. *The Eve of St Agnes* explores how one can be manipulated through appealing to this weakness for 'visions of delight' (*Eve*, V, 47), thereby alerting the reader to the hazards of spectacles of pleasure. From the opening of the poem, Keats demonstrates how the 'sable charm' (*Fall*, I, 10) of artistic images and aesthetic beauty can falsely stir sympathetic feeling. The Beadsman's easily stimulated imagination condemns him to a life of 'harsh penance' (III, 24) in which he becomes enclosed within painful fantasies:

The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails
(II, 14-18).

The Eve of St Agnes establishes its narrative through Spenserian stanzas that, according to Kucich, create 'one tapestrylike picture',⁵³ depicting a mosaic of interrelated images through the appeal of poetic language to the visionary imagination. But the poem ironically begins with a reversal of this model, portraying sculptured forms in mid-utterance, their devotional language frozen within stone. Keats plays upon the multiple meanings of the noun 'oratories', a word that can be understood as both 'A place of prayer; a room or building for private worship',⁵⁴ as well as 'The art of the orator or of public speaking; the formal art of speaking

⁵² Kucich, 'So Continuing Long', pp. 199-200. In his 2nd August 1820 review of the *Lamia* volume in *The Indicator*, Leigh Hunt also described *The Eve of St Agnes* as 'rather a picture than a story'. Leigh Hunt, 'Review, *The Indicator*' in *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 165-177 (p. 172). Earl R. Wasserman likewise shows how mid-nineteenth century and pre-Raphaelite interpretations of the poem centred on Keats's sensuous imagery, quoting Hugh Miller as calling the poem 'a gorgeous gallery of poetic pictures'. Earl R. Wasserman, 'The Eve of St Agnes' in *The Finer Tone Keats' Major Poems* (Westport, Connecticut: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), pp. 84-137 (p. 99).

⁵³ Kucich, 'So Continuing Long', p. 203.

⁵⁴ 'Oratory, n.1', *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132212?rskey=oV43cG&result=1#firstMatch>> [accessed 13/11/2018].

eloquently or persuasively, esp. according to set rules; rhetoric'.⁵⁵ The image of 'dumb orat'ries' (II, 16) elides the material presence of architecture with the verbal qualities of language, the private with the public, to present figures that appear to be rendered mute and 'dumb' by their very attempts at utterance. Keats's image reveals the potential for language to become little more than empty rhetoric and false eloquence devoid of real devotional significance, locking one within a meaningless set of rules and an isolated world of superficial piety. As with the 'dumb enchantment' (*Fall*, I, 11) of the fanatic's dream, Keats presents an image of religious fanaticism in which the Beadsman becomes imprisoned by his own 'dumb orat'ries' (*Eve*, II, 16) within a world of 'faery fancy' (VIII, 8), adopting the restricted, 'purgatorial' (I, 15) existence of the 'sculptur'd dead' (I, 14). Stillinger argues that, like Madeline, the Beadsman is a 'hoodwinked dreamer' who is 'isolated from the crowd and from actuality' and 'so engrossed in an ascetic ritual that he is sealed off from the joys of life'.⁵⁶ Keats's sculptured images also foreground the participation of language within such ritualisation, cautioning the reader against the ability for 'dumb orat'ries' (II, 16) to hoodwink. 'Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve' (*Fall*, I, 176), the Beadsman is a dreamer who relegates 'The joys of his life' (*Eve*, III, 23) to the past so as to grieve for 'sinners' sake' (III, 27), praying for those with aching, purgatorial existences, and reducing his own life to the repeated uttering of words that he believes will assist his 'flight for heaven' (I, 8). The Beadsman's weak and failing spirit reveals the arduous mental and emotional labour involved in this existence, as he prays, grieves, and attempts to identify with the ostensibly suffering figures represented by the artwork. '[M]eagre' and 'wan' (II, 12) the Beadsman comes to resemble and ostensibly feel in league with the 'sculptured dead' (II, 14). And yet, the second stanza also speaks in a quasi-parodic tone, hinting at the Beadsman's misdirected sympathy towards the physical qualities of the sculpture and his identification with the stone itself rather than with what the artworks represent. In his 19th September 1819 letter to John Taylor, Richard Woodhouse writes of *The Eve of St Agnes* that Keats 'attempt[s] to play with his reader', employing 'the "Don Juan" style of mingling up sentiment & sneering' (*Letters: John Keats* II, 163). The Beadsman is similarly presented as a sentimental reader of art who we might sneer at, a misguided figure whose will to sympathise with, grieve for, and imagine the sorrow of others paradoxically reveals the immaturity of his imagination. The beadsman imagines the sculptured figures as living, breathing beings entrapped within stone, focussing on the 'black

⁵⁵ 'Oratory, n.2', *Oxford English Dictionary*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132213?rskey=oV43cG&result=2#firstMatch>> [accessed 13/11/2018].

⁵⁶ Stillinger, 'The Hoodwinking of Madeline', pp. 84-85.

[...] rails' (II, 15) that they are positioned behind and imagining their 'hoods and mails' (II, 18) as painful and 'icy' (II, 18) entrapments. So invested in the life of the artworks, the beadsman's sympathy becomes misdirected towards the illusion of the sculptured figures themselves rather than considering how what they represent comes to bear upon reality. Keats reveals the ability for aesthetic images to appeal wrongly to a sympathetic imagination that 'fails / To think' (II, 17-18) and is ensnared within its own erroneous fantasies, manipulating a person's actions to their own detriment. Keats subtly attacks mawkish art that preys upon a sentimental and 'dumb' audience who are devoid of an ability to think for themselves.⁵⁷

'Vague, Regardless Eyes'

The Eve of St Agnes threatens to place those who are undiscerning and uncritical about the status of truth in stories, gossip, and myth in a position of danger and vulnerability. Keats makes it uncertain if Madeline's abstinent behaviour and careful attention to St Agnes's rituals demonstrate self-control and a retreat from the lustful gaze of men and into the pleasures of her own private imaginings, or if she internalises outmoded romance stories that govern her vision, becoming manipulated and deceived by 'Agnes' dreams' (VII, 63). Following the tales of 'old dames' (V, 45), Madeline appears to be seduced by language into 'ceremonies' (VI, 50) that dictate her behaviour and seem to control both her internal and external sight, making her blind to the 'amorous' (VII, 60) advances of others. By visually fixating on the thing she desires to the exclusion of all else, the myth of St Agnes promises Madeline the fulfilment of her wish: she must not 'look behind, nor sideways, but require / Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that [she] desire[s]' (VI, 53-54). Madeline is repeatedly positioned as an unseeing figure in the poem, leading critics such as Andrew Bennett to notice how: 'Keats makes no bones about her blindness to "reality" [...]. What Madeline "sees" are "visions wide" (line 202) or waking dreams'.⁵⁸ Even before she performs the night-time ceremonies of St Agnes Eve that occlude her sight and require her 'not [to] look behind' (XXVI, 234), Madeline dances 'along with vague, regardless eyes' (VIII, 64), focussing on a private world of pleasurable internal visions and imagining 'all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn' (VIII, 72). Oblivious to 'whisperers in anger' (VIII, 68) and 'looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn' (VIII, 69), Madeline excludes

⁵⁷ In a letter to Woodhouse on 22nd September 1819, Keats rejected the mawkishness of *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, before suggesting that there was 'a good deal' of objection of this kind in *St Agnes Eve* 'only not so glaring' (*Letters: John Keats* II, 174). Keats's subtle and deliberate employment of mawkishness in these romance poems repeatedly and derisively calls attention to the intellectual limitations of those audiences who refuse to 'look to the reality' (*Letters: John Keats* II, 174) of the romance genre. For a fuller discussion on the relationship between romance, reality, and mawkishness see the chapter on *Isabella* on pp. 29-64.

⁵⁸ Andrew Bennett, 'The Eve of St Agnes' in *Keats, Narrative and Audience*, p. 98.

herself from the revelries of the ballroom in which she is subjected to the ‘eager-eyed’ (IV, 34) gaze of others and made the object of competitive and violent male desire. As with *The Fall of Hyperion*, which demonstrates how those who observe while remaining unseen gain power over that which is in their line of vision, Bennett argues that ‘looking in “St Agnes” is represented as potentially violent: sight constitutes power — the power of seeing and of not being seen’.⁵⁹ Keats both asserts and complicates such a position in stanzas VII and VIII, hinting at but never committing to the latent power of those who choose not to see. It is Madeline’s blindness to and disregard for the ‘thronged resort’ (VIII, 67) that causes ‘amorous cavalier[s]’ (VII, 60) to retire, ostensibly removing her from the threat of male sexual aggression and redirecting her attention inwards and towards her own private ‘visions of delight’ (VI, 46); a shift that appears to reassert the liberating power of female pleasure and sexual desire. Reading Madeline as a masturbatory dreamer, Rachel Schulkins points out how under ‘St Agnes’s repressive commands’ Madeline must ‘confine her desires to her imagination’ and ‘deny herself sensory pleasures’,⁶⁰ becoming ‘the dupe of her own beliefs’.⁶¹ But Schulkins also begins to register how Madeline experiences sensual pleasure during the very act of denying and delaying such physical stimulation. Like the bold lover ‘forever panting’ (III, 27) on the Grecian Urn, Keats shows how Madeline’s anticipation of sexual fulfilment becomes a painful pleasure that is experienced by her body as nervous excitement: ‘Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short’ (VIII, 65). As Daniela Garofalo argues, Madeline ‘insists on deferral and finds pleasure in delay’.⁶² While Madeline’s asceticism leads critics such as Stillinger and Bennett to argue that she is removed from and blind to reality, self-denial can also be understood to acquire a corporeality at the beginning of the poem, wherein imaginative pleasures stimulate a quasi-erotic physiological response. The rituals of St Agnes become tentatively framed as an assertion of female pleasure.

As a figure of chastity, St Agnes seems to protect Madeline from the dangers of male lust so that Madeline’s investment in religious rituals that control her vision supposedly place her under ‘St Agnes’ saintly care’ (V, 44). However, although the tales of old beldames such as Angela, alongside the apparently protective figure of St Agnes, should affirm the presence and power of the female voice in guiding Madeline through the hazards of ‘amorous cavalier[s]’

⁵⁹ Bennett, ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, p. 99.

⁶⁰ Schulkins, ‘Phantoms of Sexual Repression in *The Eve of St Agnes*’ in *Keats, Modesty, and Masturbation*, pp. 91-107 (p. 97).

⁶¹ Schulkins, ‘Phantoms of Sexual Repression’, p. 97.

⁶² Daniela Garofalo, “‘Give me that voice again’”, p. 361.

(VII, 60), they are repeatedly depicted as agents of deception and female disempowerment. Failing to warn Madeline of the folly of St Agnes' myth, Angela 'laughs awhile' (XIV, 126) as 'Good angels her deceive!' (XIV, 125), finding humour in Madeline's innocence at the same time as she naively dismisses and underestimates the dangers of being 'Hoodwinked with faery fancy' (VIII, 70). Madeline does not so much escape from a hostile space of 'snarling trumpets' (IV, 31) and 'argent revelry' (V, 37) by withdrawing into a haven of her own imaginative pleasures over which she retains personal agency. Instead, she sighs for and subscribes to the reality of 'Agnes' dreams' (VII, 63), internalising and enacting the visions of another. Madeline's 'visions of delight' (VI, 47) are not straightforwardly an expression of individual female desire, but the outpouring of a 'brain, new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay / Of old romance' (V, 40-41). Her visions are the manifestation of antiquated stories that continue to prop up a violent and competitive patriarchal system of 'plume[s] [and] tiara[s]' (V, 38), 'Hyena foeman, and hot-blooded lords' (X, 86). As Jerrold E. Hogle writes, *The Eve of St Agnes* is indebted to the anxieties of gothic fiction that sees 'lovers struggling with Catholic injunctions and patriarchal restrictions; the women trapped in male-dominated realms'.⁶³ The private spaces of Madeline's fancy become another realm that men threaten to dominate and exploit. The cavalier may be rebuffed by Madeline's unheeding eyes, but he is 'not cooled by her 'high disdain' (VII, 61), remaining a dangerous presence to which Madeline is blinded throughout the poem.

'A Stratagem, that Makes the Beldame Start'

Unlike the 'amorous cavalier' (VII, 60) who wishes to capture Madeline's attention but whom she fails to see, Porphyro chooses to remain hidden, ensuring that 'All eyes be muffled' (X, 83) to his presence. It is such deliberate hiddenness that makes Porphyro a figure of suspicion throughout the poem so that he not only seems to deceive Angela and Madeline, but also threatens to trick the reader into believing in the innocence of his intentions. The presentation of Porphyro's character is poised between a virtuous lover who wishes to help Madeline 'realise and materialise her desires rather than force his on her',⁶⁴ and a predatory sexual

⁶³ Jerrold E. Hogle, 'The Gothic-Romantic Relationship: Underground Histories in "The Eve of St Agnes"', *European Romantic Review*, 14 (2003), pp. 205-223 (p. 207).

⁶⁴ Schulkins, 'Phantoms of Sexual Repression', p. 105. Heidi Thomson also argues that 'a greater understanding of "La belle dame sans mercy" and its well timed use in the sequence of Madeline's ritual and Porphyro's stratagem reassesses the relationship between Madeline and Porphyro as one of mutual consent as opposed to either rape or a (non-sexual) idealized dream illusion'. Heidi Thomson, 'Eavesdropping on "The Eve of St. Agnes": Madeline's Sensual Ear and Porphyro's Ancient Ditty', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97 (1998), pp. 337-351 (p. 339).

aggressor whose ‘stratagem’ (XVI, 139) dupes Madeline into losing her virginity.⁶⁵ It is the poem’s oscillation between these two interpretations that supports the image of Porphyro’s shiftiness, making the reader cautious of being hoodwinked by Keats’s poetic strategies. *The Eve of St Agnes* cultivates the reader’s mistrust by providing narrative clues that undermine the narrator’s presentation of Porphyro’s character:

[...] Beside the portal doors,
 Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
 All saints to give him sight of Madeline
 But for one moment in the tedious hours,
 That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
 Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss — in sooth such things have been
 (IX, 76-81).

From the moment he is introduced into the narrative, Porphyro is figured as transgressive, trespassing through the chambers, doorways, and passages of rival ‘foemen’ (X, 86), as well as imagining and longing to gaze at Madeline’s body while remaining ‘unseen’ (IX, 80). Such voyeuristic behaviour and concealment from Madeline’s eyes prefigures his wish to ‘touch, [and] kiss’ (IX, 81) her, thereby hinting at Porphyro’s desire to gain access to Madeline’s body without her knowledge or consent. Christopher Ricks points out how the idea ‘that Keats is sexually perturbing’ comes from ‘the accusation that there is something voyeuristic about his art’.⁶⁶ And yet Keats touches upon Porphyro’s perverse intentions without fully acknowledging them as a violation, instead undermining this reading by listing first Porphyro’s wish to ‘speak’ (IX, 81) with Madeline and presumably reveal his presence. Porphyro becomes hidden by interpretive ambiguity, giving the impression that he ‘canst not surely be the same that [he] didst seem’ (XVI, 144) and drawing the reader’s gaze towards narrative details that might uncover the truth of his intentions. Importantly, in stanza XVI, the reader is told that Porphyro’s stratagem to enact the myth of St Agnes comes upon him suddenly ‘like a full-blown rose’ (XVI, 136) after a chance conversation with Angela. But stanza IX also describes how Porphyro arrives at the mansion envisioning and hoping to gaze upon Madeline’s ‘beauty unespied’ (XIX, 166), calling upon ‘All saints’ (IX, 78), including St Agnes, to aid him in this

⁶⁵ The argument that Porphyro might be seen as a ‘date-rapist’ is famously set forth by Stillinger in his essay on ‘The Hoodwinking of Madeline’.

⁶⁶ Ricks, ‘Keats, Byron, and “Slippery Blisses”’ in *Keats and Embarrassment*, p. 86.

endeavour. Sperry reads ‘the dynamic image of the rose’s unfolding’ as the moment in which Porphyro’s wish to behold Madeline flowers into a fully-formed thought.⁶⁷ Sperry seems to propose a shift from an unconscious desire or wish to a conscious thought. But the use of the verb ‘implore’ (IX, 77) alongside the detail with which Porphyro imagines his night-time encounter with Madeline in stanza IX also suggests the deliberateness and self-consciousness of his intentions. Read in this context, Porphyro’s stratagem acquires an unsettling premeditation, suggesting his determination to actualise his imaginative visions of sexual fulfilment. Unlike Madeline, Keats’s poetic strategies encourage the reader to ‘look behind’ (XXVI, 234) to earlier stanzas to make sense of the narrative, thereby making us doubt the narrator’s presentation of Porphyro’s character so that, as Sperry argues, the poem is engaged in testing ‘the limits of poetic belief’.⁶⁸

Porphyro’s strategising and scheming is dependent upon an ability to control how he appears to others, wherein his careful command of language not only enables him to manipulate stories to his own advantage, but also to create a narrative of himself and his intentions that appeals to Angela’s sympathies. That Porphyro’s ‘eyes gr[o]w brilliant’ (XV, 132), filling with tears at the thought of ‘Madeline asleep in lap of legends old’ (XV, 135) seems to support the position that he arrives at the mansion without the intention of seducing ‘St Agnes’ charmèd maid’ (XXII, 192), functioning as a sincere physiological response to a newly formed thought which flushes his brow (XVI, 137).⁶⁹ In *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression* (1824), for example, Bell argues that the ‘expressions, attitudes, and movements of the human figure are the characters of’ a universal language that reveal the passions of man’s internal world.⁷⁰ Bell proposes that strong emotions ‘produce uncontrollable movements of the body’ disclosing to the onlooker an honest representation of man’s thoughts and feelings,⁷¹ while also acknowledging that we might ‘learn to control our passions by restraining their expression’.⁷² Bell writes that ‘The eye is the most lively feature in the countenance’ and that ‘In the eye we

⁶⁷ Sperry, ‘Romance as Wish-Fulfilment’ in *Keats The Poet*, pp. 198-220 (p. 212).

⁶⁸ Sperry, ‘Romance as Wish-Fulfilment’, p. 202.

⁶⁹ For a fuller investigation of the biological and imaginative status of blushing in Keats’s poetry see Ricks’s monograph on *Keats and Embarrassment*. Ricks notes how ‘To blush is “to cast a glance” (O.E.D. vb. 2)’, thinking through the relationship between being stared at and blushing. Ricks, ‘Keats, Byron, and “Slippery Blisses”’, p. 87.

⁷⁰ Charles Bell, *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as Connected with the Fine Arts* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), p. 2.

⁷¹ Bell, *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*, p. 134.

⁷² Bell, *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*, p. 181.

look for meaning, for human sentiment, for reproof'.⁷³ In *The Eve of St Agnes*, it is uncertain if the reader can trust the outward signs of Porphyro's brilliant eyes and blushing cheeks. Keats hints at Porphyro's ability to control the appearance of his countenance, carefully choreographing how he looks both to Angela and the reader. The 'purple riot' (XVI, 138) of blood that affects his 'pained heart' (XVI, 137) gestures at the incontrovertible bodily reality of Porphyro's excited anticipation, supporting the idea that his stratagem is freshly conceived. However, his tactics in winning over the necessary assistance of Angela also reveal Porphyro's deliberate self-fashioning of the expressions of his face and voice. Porphyro first weeps, imploring 'Good Angela, [to] believe [...] by these tears' (XVII, 150) that he will not harm Madeline nor 'one of her soft ringlets [...] displace / Or look with ruffian passion in her face' (XVII, 148-149). As with Isabella's 'thin tears' (*Isabella*, LIV, 425), crying seems to operate as biological evidence of the authenticity of his emotions and the honourableness of his intentions.⁷⁴ But Porphyro's weeping is belied by a fixation with specific parts of Madeline's body, her face and hair, and the suggestion of his desire to touch these intimate features in the adjective 'soft' and the verb 'displace', thereby hinting at a 'ruffian passion' (XVII, 149) that he simultaneously denounces. As Stillinger notices, Porphyro 'enforces his promise with a suicidal threat: Angela must believe him, or he "will... Awake, with horrid shout!" his foemen, "And beard them" (151-153)'.⁷⁵ Porphyro further demonstrates his bullish nature by frightening Angela into assisting him with his stratagem; an unsuccessful technique that causes him to change his approach altogether. Angela brings:

A gentler speech from burning Porphyro,
 So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe
 (XVIII, 159-162).

Keats describes Porphyro as 'burning' (XVIII, 159) at the same time as he draws attention to the 'gentler' (XVIII, 159) quality of his speech, indicating a deliberate effort on Porphyro's part of curbing an almost aggressive desire in order to present himself as the victim of woe and

⁷³ Bell, *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ For a fuller investigation of the relationship between tears and sincerity see the chapter on *Isabella, Or The Pot of Basil* on pp. 29-64.

⁷⁵ Stillinger, 'Hoodwinking of Madeline', p. 74.

sorrow. Through his masterful control of prosody, Keats similarly demonstrates how the narrator's poetic voice can be carefully constructed to create a particular impression upon the listener. The use of a spondee in the fourth foot of line 160, for example, emphasises the long vowel sound 'ee' in the word 'deep', which alongside the qualifier 'such', exaggerates the supposed profundity of Porphyro's emotions and lends the line an artificial and 'sneering' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 163) tone. Keats seems to parody the 'deep sorrowing' (XVIII, 160) of Porphyro's voice so as to call out how he carefully controls his 'gentler speech' (XVIII, 159) in order to appeal to Angela's sympathies. In so doing, Keats illustrates how narrative voices might be constructed to misguide the reader or listener's interpretation, in turn casting doubt on the trustworthiness of his own poetic voice. Keats's quasi-parodic tone in line 160 may well be another subtle poetic strategy to make us view Porphyro unfavourably. While the reader remains suspicious, Porphyro's altered manner secures Angela's confidence. By portraying himself in the image of a suffering lover, Porphyro's stratagem is presented in a way that too easily gains Angela's trust and threatens to worsen her 'poor, weak, palsy-stricken' (XVIII, 155) condition. Angela's physical and mental wellbeing become secondary to Porphyro's pleasure, which is to be facilitated at any cost, whether or not it causes the ailing servant 'weal or woe' (XVIII, 162). However tentatively framed, Keats shows how Porphyro manipulates his appearance in order to coerce women into consenting to that which 'affright[s]' (XVIII, 154) them. *The Eve of St Agnes* makes the reader mistrust the appearance of truth, showing how looks can be deceptive.

'Gazed upon her Empty Dress'

Keats's poetic 'stratagem' (XVI, 139) cautions the reader against the allure and 'sable charm' (*Fall*, I, 10) of stories that might deceive through 'visions of delight' (VI, 47), even as it forces us to recognise our desire to be deceived by such visions and 'Hoodwinked with faery fancy' (VIII, 70). The reader becomes conscious of our attraction to visual beauty at the same time as we are aware of and repelled by the potential perverseness of such desire. Margaret Homans argues that *The Eve of St Agnes* is 'repellently seductive [...] by design'.⁷⁶ What repels in the poem is not Keats's use of 'improper expressions' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 163) that depict quasi-pornographic images designed to arouse the reader. Instead Keats's use of inference makes the reader imagine Madeline's nakedness for ourselves so that we are repelled by the

⁷⁶ Margaret Homans, 'Keats Reading Women, Women Reading Keats', *Studies in Romanticism*, 29 (1990), pp. 341-370 (p. 362).

vulgarity of our own internal visions. It is by creating a slippage between observing and envisaging Madeline's naked body that Keats forces the reader to confront the troubling voyeurism of the imagination:

Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
 Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;
 Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed
 (XXVI, 227-231).

Made to feel as if we are trespassing into the private spaces of Madeline's bedchamber, Keats forces the reader to adopt a scopophilic gaze, positioning us in the 'coveit' (XXI, 188) with Porphyro so that our view of Madeline is filtered through the transgressive vision of a peeping tom. Keats illuminates Madeline's body with the 'Rose-bloom' (XXV, 220) glow of moonlight that shines through the stained glass casement onto her 'fair breast' (XXV, 218) as she prays, casting a seductive and beautifying light over the blazon of stanza XXVI. Ricks notices Keats's 'voyeuristic imagination' in *The Eve of St Agnes*,⁷⁷ stressing how 'the general sense of watching the naked is very strong' in his romance poems.⁷⁸ Throughout the stanzas in Madeline's bedchamber, Keats is elusively suggestive. Stanza XXVI does not present the reader with an explicit image of nudity, but hints at nakedness just enough to provoke the reader's imagination and thereby make us imagine for ourselves Madeline's state of undress. The reader's gaze follows the suggestive movements of Madeline's hands over her body as she gradually disrobes, moving from her hair, to the 'warmèd jewels' (XXVI, 228) that we assume press against her bosom,⁷⁹ to the 'fragrant bodice' (XXVI, 229) upon her torso, and lastly creeping down her legs to her 'knees' (XXVI, 230). Keats's description involves the reader in more than simply looking at Madeline's nakedness, asking us to imagine the warm feel of her jewels and the 'fragrant' smell of her bodice that covers her chest and stomach so that the reader might

⁷⁷ Ricks, 'Keats, Byron, and "Slippery Blisses"', p. 87.

⁷⁸ Ricks, 'Keats, Byron, and "Slippery Blisses"', p. 87.

⁷⁹ John Barnard and Grant F. Scott, among other critics, notice how Keats reworked stanza XXVI multiple times. In one draft of line 228, Keats wrote 'unclasps her bosom jewels'. Keats retains a strong focus on Madeline's bosom in this stanza, even as he does not directly employ the word. '[Explanatory] Notes for [*Eve of St Agnes*] pp. 318-20' in *John Keats The Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard, p. 649; Grant F. Scott, 'Keats's the Eve of St Agnes', *The Explicator*, 49 (1991), pp. 146-149 (p. 147).

find themselves visualising the touch and odour of Madeline's skin and breasts.⁸⁰ By creating a blazon, Keats makes the reader pause over specific features of Madeline's form so that we cannot escape a detailed exploration of the most beautiful parts of her figure. And yet, through choosing not to detail the most intimate space of Madeline's body, Keats also makes the reader envisage what the unclenching of her 'rich attire' (XXVI, 230) exposes in the space between her chest and knees, thereby drawing attention towards the obscenity that underlies the reader's imagining of and desire to stare at Madeline's genitals.⁸¹ Madeline's night-time preparations are described as an erotic striptease that the onlooker must participate in. As Woodhouse writes in his letter to Taylor, *The Eve of St Agnes* does not contain

improper expressions but all is left to inference, and tho' profanely speaking, the Interest on the reader's imagination is greatly heightened, yet I do apprehend it will render the poem unfit for ladies (*Letters: John Keats II*, 163).

Inference becomes a poetic 'stratagem' (XVI, 139) that reveals the potential profanity and impropriety of an excited imagination so that it is the reader who is made to feel 'unfit' for the polite society of ladies during the act of reading this poem.⁸² For all the images of freeing, unclasping, and unloosening, the stanza arrives at the suggestion of entrapment through the simile of an alluring 'mermaid' (XXVI, 231) who seems to be ensnared by the very seaweed that partially covers her. Siren-like, Madeline appears as if she is tempting Porphyro and the reader into an unknown danger, rather than becoming entrapped by another's hazardous scheme. Bennett argues that 'One major function of description in "The Eve of St Agnes" is to seduce the reader into an acceptance of a potentially scandalous ethos'.⁸³ Here, Keats threatens to lure the reader into accepting this depiction of Madeline as 'la belle dame sans merci' (XXXIII, 293) so that we may well forget that this scene is filtered through the sexualised gaze of Porphyro who is 'half-hidden' (XVI, 231) from our line of vision. Entangled in interpretive and ethical uncertainty, the reader cannot discern whether we are being entrapped by Keats's

⁸⁰ Several critics, including Scott, Bennett, and Thomson also notice how Keats employs all of the senses to provide a complete image of Madeline's body. Bennett, 'Eve of St Agnes', p. 108; Scott, 'Keats and the Eve of St Agnes', p. 147; Thomson, 'Eavesdropping on "The Eve of St. Agnes"', p. 344.

⁸¹ Keats also uses this approach when describing the Nymph's nakedness in *Lamia*. For a fuller exploration of this scene, see pp. 143-144 from the *Lamia* chapter.

⁸² In his response to Woodhouse's letter, Taylor writes of his unwillingness to publish 'any thing which can only be read by Men, since even on their Minds a bad Effect must follow the Encouragement of those Thoughts which cannot be raised without Impropriety' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 182).

⁸³ Bennett, 'The Eve of St Agnes', p. 106.

visions of pleasure, or if, alongside Porphyro, we are responsible for creating and indulging in such visions, thereby committing an ‘ocular violence towards Madeline’.⁸⁴

‘Into Her Dream He Melted’

It is Keats’s risky depictions of female nakedness and sexual intimacy in *The Eve of St Agnes* that prompted both the censure and the censorship of his publisher John Taylor. Taylor insisted that Keats change his September 1819 reworkings of stanzas 35 and 36 in order to remove those improper passages in which Porphyro, ‘winds by degrees his arm around her [Madeline], presses [himself] breast to breast [with her], and acts all the acts of a bonâ fide husband, while she fancies she is only playing the part of a Wife in a dream’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 163).⁸⁵ Closely reading Woodhouse’s 19th and 20th September 1819 letter to Taylor, which objects to these ‘suggestions of rape’,⁸⁶ Bennett focuses on Woodhouse’s inability to self-censor his imagination and ‘look no further’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 163) than the innocent passages of Keats’s romance. Bennett argues that ‘the idea that one can “overlook” the in-decent aspects of a “decent” poem, or that once can avert one’s gaze’ involves ‘an uncomfortable duplicity’ on the part of the reader.⁸⁷ He writes that ‘by “look[ing] no further” the reader neglects to read: from this it follows that to read — to be read properly, fully, with attention — the poet is forced to make them *in-decent*’.⁸⁸ But the original copy of stanza 36 that Keats was made to include, continues with the poetic strategy of inference, deliberately censoring and occluding from direct observation explicit details of sexual contact between Madeline and Porphyro, thereby more fully implicating the reader in poetic indecency. The reader is required to look closely at the formal and linguistic details of the stanza and to participate in the hazardous decoding of the poetic image so as to uncover whether Keats is describing an ‘ethereal’ (XXXVI, 318),

⁸⁴ Bennett, ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, p. 97.

⁸⁵ The September 1819 edits to stanza 36 explicitly stress that Madeline was asleep with the unbroken spell of St Agnes guarding her in ‘serene repose’ as Porphyro ‘zoned her, heart to heart’ and mingled with her ‘wild dream’ (omitted stanza XXXVI, 319, 315, and 320), leading Stillinger to argue that Keats intends for Madeline to be represented as a ‘deceivèd thing’ (XXXVI, 332) who cries out with ‘the lament of the seduced maiden [328-330]’. Schulkins, on the other hand, foregrounds the image of Madeline with open eyes in line 298 to argue for Madeline’s wakefulness and her consensual participation in love-making. Stillinger, ‘Hoodwinking of Madeline’, p. 82; Schulkins, ‘Phantoms of Sexual Repression’, p. 105.

⁸⁶ Hogle argues that ‘the Gothic haunts Porphyro’s sexual triumph with suggestions of rape’. Hogle, ‘The Gothic-Romantic Relationship’, p. 214.

⁸⁷ Bennett, ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, p. 112.

⁸⁸ Bennett, ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, p. 112.

spiritual comingling between the lovers or a ‘voluptuous’ (XXXVI, 317) account of ‘throbbing’ (XXXVI, 318) bodies melting into one another through the sexual act:⁸⁹

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
 Seen mid the sapphire heaven’s deep repose;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet —
 Solution sweet. (XXXVI, 316-322).

In stanza XXXV, Sperry points out Madeline’s ‘recognition of a gap between desire and appearance, a moment of painful contraction’ between the Porphyro of her dreams whose ‘eyes were spiritual and clear’ (XXXV, 310) and his actual statuesque appearance,⁹⁰ which is ‘pallid, chill, and drear!’ (XXXV, 311). Speaking for the first time, Madeline ambiguously demands ‘Give me that voice again, my Porphyro / Those looks immortal’ (XXXV, 312-313), wherein Keats makes it unclear if she is: asking Porphyro to resume his ‘ancient ditty’ (XXXIII, 291) on the lute; continuing to ‘moan forth witless words’ (XXXIV, 303) from her dream state; calling out to the Porphyro of her dreams and asking for a return to the ideal visions of sleep; or fully awake and knowingly asking Porphyro to become the lover of her night-time fantasies. Keats draws attention to Madeline’s ‘voluptuous accents’ (XXXVI, 317) and the quality of her voice, rather than making explicit what she is communicating or whether she is consenting to have sex with Porphyro. In Stanza XXXVI, the reader, like Porphyro, is encouraged and ‘impassioned’ (XXXVI, 316) by ‘voluptuous accents’ (XXXVI, 317) that never quite consent to being read as a depiction of sexual intercourse. While Sperry proposes that stanza XXXVI presents ‘a more intense reintegration of vision and reality in which the lovers are united’,⁹¹ the gap between imagination and reality remains intact for the reader throughout the stanzas, which evoke the reader’s erotic visions at the same time as they make such visions sit uncomfortably against poetic description. Keats utilises sexually suggestive imagery and language throughout the stanza even as he employs simile to distance himself from such crassness. The stanza begins

⁸⁹ Wolfson also argues that by ‘turning the poetry back to the initial codes of flowers and stars’, Keats perhaps gained ‘more of an effect in the arousal of a reader’s decoding’. Wolfson, ‘Still Romancing: The Eve of St Agnes; a Dream-Sonnet; La Belle Dame Sans Merci’ in *Reading John Keats*, pp. 72-86 (p. 80).

⁹⁰ Sperry, ‘Romance as Wish-Fulfilment’, p. 214

⁹¹ Sperry, ‘Romance as Wish-Fulfilment’, p. 214

with the apparently phallic depiction of Porphyro arising at ‘voluptuous accents’ (XXXVI, 317) into a ‘flushed’ and ‘throbbing’ (XXXVI, 318) state, whereby Keats appears to stress the pulsating excitation of Porphyro’s blood and the visceral presence of his body. When positioned amid such erotic diction, the verb ‘arose’ (XXXVI, 318) also becomes erotically charged, bearing homophonic echoes with the word ‘arouse’ so that the image of Porphyro arising strongly implies that he has an erection. The presence of the body in a state of sexual arousal leads Jeffrey N. Cox to read *The Eve of St Agnes* as a poem that reclaims ‘the immediacy and power of erotic pleasure’ from the dreamworld of romance.⁹² But the use of simile within the stanza also works to set bodily pleasure at a remove, comparing Porphyro to the ‘Ethereal’ (XXXVI, 317) element of a ‘star’ (XXXVI, 317) amid the ‘sapphire heaven’ (XXXVI, 318). Porphyro seems to answer Madeline’s lamentations in stanza XXXV by acquiring ‘looks immortal’ (XXXV, 313), melting into the vision she had of him within her dream (XXXVI, 320). Such celestial imagery leads Earl R. Wasserman to read stanza XXXVI as a raising of mortal passion to superhuman intensity in which the lovers transcend ‘Beyond [...] mortal man’ (XXXVI, 316) and melt ‘into a spaceless, timeless, selfless realm of mystery’.⁹³ Yet just as Keats begins to guide the reader’s analytical gaze towards a figurative interpretation of this stanza and away from the physical pleasure of throbbing body parts, he also presents the reader with the sexually suggestive line: ‘Into her dream he [Porphyro] melted’ (XXXVI, 320). The movement of the stanza towards simile and metaphor threatens to render the imagery of lines 320-322 into a sexually obscene spectacle in which the blending of odours and the final reference to a ‘solution sweet’ (XXXVI, 322) at the end of the long poetic sentence become vulgar depictions of the post-coital scent of embracing bodies and the mingling of sexual fluids. Keats uses anastrophe to begin line 320 with the preposition ‘into’, dangerously spotlighting an act of penetration and reasserting the presence of the male body in a condition of sexual pleasure. Stanza 36 is poised between multiple interpretations, appearing to state simultaneously: ‘the liberatory, salvific’ pleasures of bodily reality;⁹⁴ the ethereal extra-worldly delights of *Endymion*’s ‘Pleasure Thermometer’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 218), wherein Porphyro and Madeline achieve transcendence beyond mortality to ‘fellowship divine’

⁹² Jeffrey N. Cox, ‘*Lamia, Isabella, and The Eve of St. Agnes: Eros and “Romance”*’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 53-68 (p. 65).

⁹³ Wasserman, ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, p. 123.

⁹⁴ Cox, ‘*Lamia, Isabella, and The Eve of St. Agnes*’, p. 65. Stillingner also proposes that ‘In Madeline’s dream the imaginative enactment of pleasure comes first; it is an earthly repetition of spiritual pleasure that follows [in stanza 36], and perhaps in a grosser, rather than a finer, tone’. Stillingner, ‘Hoodwinking of Madeline’, p. 72.

(*Endymion*, I, 778);⁹⁵ and the integration of imaginative vision and bodily reality, in which the lovers both fulfil their private desires in a ‘Solution sweet’ (XXXVI, 322).⁹⁶ Porphyro and Madeline become hidden by interpretive ambiguity so that at the end of the poem they not only escape the sight of ‘bloated wassailers’ (XXXIX, 346) and the slumbering Porter (XLI, 363), but also the careful observation of the reader. Keats places his readers in the contradictory position of ‘sleeping dragons’ (XL, 353) with ‘glaring watch’ (XL, 354), alert to the dangers of the unseen but unable to discern if we are correctly witnessing Keats’s hazardous depiction of sexual intimacy or indulging in a perverse sexual fantasy created by our own dreaming imaginations.

‘The Carved Angels / Ever Eager-Eyed / Stared’

The Fall of Hyperion leaves the reader on the outside of the Titans’ pain as an onlooker who is curious about and attracted to the sight of suffering. *The Eve of St Agnes*, on the other hand, alerts the reader to the dangers of voyeurism even as it implicates us in the pleasure of watching another’s experience of sensual and imaginative delight. Just as ‘The carved angels / ever eager-eyed’ (*Eve*, IV, 34) stare at Madeline amidst the ‘argent revelry’ (*Eve*, V, 37), Keats composes a poem that stares back at its reader, making us self-conscious of and unsettled by the pleasure we feel in reading ‘visions of delight’ (*Eve*, VI, 47). Heidi Thomson points out how critical attention in *The Eve of St Agnes* often focuses on Porphyro’s desire, rather than Madeline’s.⁹⁷ But it is also the reader’s desire that Keats is seeking to appeal to and bring to the surface in this poem. Through the deliberate use of sexually suggestive narrative description, Keats engages the reader’s visual imagination, forcing us to confront our own erotic desires at the same time as he draws attention to the potential impropriety and vulgarity of such imaginings. In so doing, Keats holds the reader ethically and intellectually accountable as participants in co-creating the poem’s risky imagery. Bennett argues that, ‘The gorgeousness of description [in *The Eve of St Agnes*] not only enhances the reader’s pleasure but also

⁹⁵ This position was most influentially set forth by Wasserman: ‘[Keats] has reshaped a legend in order to weave through it the series of increasing intensities of the pleasure thermometer that he understood to be the necessary means of spiritual elevation before one may enter the dynamically static heaven Madeline and Porphyro are about to create for themselves’. Wasserman, ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, p. 114. Garofalo also stresses the status of the visionary, arguing that ‘the lovers maintain a relationship only to their fantasy of each other rather than with another subject’. Garofalo, “‘Give me that voice again’”, p. 364.

⁹⁶ Many critics take up this position with varying degrees of nuance. The idea of the coming together of vision and reality is most notably set forth by the following: Sperry, ‘Romance as Wish-Fulfillment’, p. 214; Kucich, ‘So Continuing Long’, p. 205; Hogle, ‘The Gothic-Romantics Relationship’, p. 209; Schulkins, ‘Phantoms of Sexual Repression’, p. 96.

⁹⁷ Thomson, ‘Eavesdropping on “The Eve of St Agnes”’, p. 340.

estranges him or her from an unmediated experience of the visual: the very virtuosity makes us wary'.⁹⁸ Similarly, *The Fall of Hyperion* harnesses the beauty of poetic language and form to attract the reader to scenes of human anguish and 'immortal sickness' (*Fall*, I, 258) so that, as Keats wrote on 15th August 1819 in a letter to Benjamin Bailey, we might come to 'look upon fine phrases as if [we] were a lover' (*John Keats: Letters* II, 140),⁹⁹ seduced by Keats's artistic 'gorgeousness' into a sadistic observation of 'sharp anguish' (*Fall*, I, 126).

In *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes*, Keats sets about exploring how an equivalence between 'the foul and fair' and a 'relish for the dark side of things' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 387) effects the reader's response to and engagement with each poem. The painful and 'diseased' become objects of desire and curiosity in *The Fall of Hyperion*;¹⁰⁰ scenes that both the poet-dreamer and the reader ache to see. In *The Eve of St Agnes*, 'visions of delight' (*Eve*, VI, 47) are threatened and even perversely enhanced by the foul or that which is 'fraudulent',¹⁰¹ 'dishonest',¹⁰² and 'morally polluted' so that the reader must acknowledge our troubled enjoyment of duplicity,¹⁰³ of things appearing one way but being another; the pleasure of decoding suggestive imagery and symbolism is fraught with uncovering that which perturbs and embarrasses. *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes* finally 'end in speculation' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 387), making the reader relish observing and questioning the foul and fair, as well as forcing us to gaze upon and examine our very enjoyment of 'speculation' itself. Looking in Keats requires the reader to strain 'at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness' (*Letters: John Keats* II, 80) so that darkness and light, the foul and fair, and scenes of pleasure and pain come to fold in on each other.

⁹⁸ Bennett, 'The Eve of St Agnes', pp. 106-107.

⁹⁹ In this letter, Keats also reflects upon his productivity in 1819, including his work on *The Eve of St Agnes* and the *Hyperion* project.

¹⁰⁰ The OED defines the 'foul' as 'diseased'. 'Foul, adj. I, 1.b', *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/73901?rskey=X3zKC2&result=1&isAdvanced=false#id>> [accessed 07/12/18].

¹⁰¹ 'Foul, adj. III, 14.c', *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/73901?rskey=X3zKC2&result=1&isAdvanced=false#id>> [accessed 07/12/18].

¹⁰² 'Foul, adj. III, 14.d', *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/73901?rskey=X3zKC2&result=1&isAdvanced=false#id>> [accessed 07/12/18].

¹⁰³ 'Foul, adj. II, 7.a', *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/73901?rskey=X3zKC2&result=1&isAdvanced=false#id>> [accessed 07/12/18].

**Chapter Four: Confusing ‘Intrigue with the Specious Chaos’: The Impurity of Pleasure
in *Lamia***

In *Lamia*, pleasure is a suspect experience that the reader is made to doubt. The complexities and contradictions of this ‘gordian’ (*Lamia*, I, 47) poem are centred in the uncertain relationship between pleasure and truth. The sensual and erotic gratification Lycius receives from Lamia putting ‘her new lips to his’ (I, 294) is strongly emphasised in the poetry. Yet Lamia’s uncertain status as a victimised, ‘penanced lady elf’ (I, 55) or the predatory ‘demon’s self’ (I, 56) threatens to make Lycius’s pleasure into nothing more than a painful and ‘foul dream’ (II, 271). Lionel Trilling draws upon Madeline’s erotic fantasy of Porphyro in *The Eve of St Agnes* to argue that: ‘The principle of pleasure is for Keats [...] the principle of reality — by it, as Wordsworth said, we *know*. But for Keats it is also the principle of illusion’.¹ Similarly, in *Lamia*, bodily pleasure obscures truth even as it occupies its own sensory reality so that at the centre of pleasure is something unknown, contradictory, and terrifying. Pleasure becomes a negatively capable state, filled with the ‘uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193) that Keats identifies in an early letter to his brothers. Keats proposes that man must remain ‘content with half knowledge’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193) without attempting to unravel the complexities of a reality we cannot comprehend. Yet *Lamia* does not evince content with such uncertainty. Just as pleasure and pain are described as ‘neighbours’ (I, 192), Keats is also aware that ‘intrigue’ or the ‘intricacy’ and ‘complexity’ of reality is easily confused with ‘specious chaos’ (I, 195):² that which seems beautiful and true, but is finally fallacious.³ *Lamia* questions how we can remain content with uncertainties and unresolved contradictions when paradox might signal the presence of something fraudulent that needs to be exposed

In the midst of ambiguity, Keats forces the reader to be a specious critic of his poem, making claims for truth that we cannot fully validate and irritably ‘reaching after’ unobtainable ‘fact and reason’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193). Stuart Sperry draws upon Keats’s 18th September 1819 journal letter to George and Georgianna to argue that, in *Lamia*, Keats remains:

¹ Lionel Trilling, ‘The Fate of Pleasure’ in *Partisan Review*, 30 (1963), pp. 167-191 (p. 173).

² See definitions of ‘Intrigue’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/98687?rkey=CFGBMG&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 2/5/2016].

³ See definitions of ‘Specious’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/186023?redirectedFrom=specious#eid>> [accessed 2/5/2016].

deliberately ambivalent and detached, refusing to take sides while encouraging others (critics for example) to do so at their own cost. What was important, as he thought about it later, was not whether the poem gave the reader ‘either pleasant or unpleasant sensations’ but that it gave him one or the other.⁴

Sperry’s polarising account of the reader’s response is inconsistent with the uncertainty and ambivalence that he also identifies in the poem, which denies the reader an unpolluted experience of either ‘pleasant or unpleasant sensations’. Keats’s 18th September 1819 letter is instead sensitive to the complex interdependence of these two sensations within the process of reading *Lamia*, explaining that there is a ‘sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way — give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation. What they want is a sensation of some sort’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 189). That the reader experiences ‘a sensation of some sort’ foregrounds a reaction that is enigmatically unspecific, highlighting the ambiguously mixed response the poem promotes in the reader and in turn undermining the indication that pleasant and unpleasant reactions to *Lamia* are mutually exclusive. While a response of ‘unperplexed delight’ (I, 327) seems teasingly within reach, the only certainty this passage of the letter contains is the sense that *Lamia* exhibits an animating ‘fire’, a sensation that overturns Sperry’s dichotomising to suggest a mingled experience of ‘aching Pleasure’ (‘Ode to Melancholy’, 23). Like Shelley’s Promethean fire, ‘Most terrible, but lovely’ (*Prometheus Unbound*, II. iv. 67),⁵ the reader is driven on by the hope of acquiring a knowledge and an understanding of truth that remains painfully and tantalisingly beyond our grasp. The reader is made to seek for resolutions that Keats’s poetry always denies, thereby demonstrating and even exacerbating the frustration inherent in uncertainty. Michael O’Neill’s suggestion that analytical resistance provides a ‘bitter edge’ (129) to artistic enjoyment can be revised.⁶ It is the teasing pain of anticipating understanding that enhances the reader’s experience of pleasure. As Adam Phillips writes of the ambiguity of flirtation, enjoyment and excitement are dependent upon painful denial so that desire is directed towards ‘a certain kind of torture, an enlivening torture’.⁷ For Keats, aesthetic pleasure is often inseparable from the bitterness that O’Neill identifies. The uncertain status of truth in *Lamia* demonstrates the impurity of pleasure by

⁴ Stuart Sperry, ‘Comic Irony: *Lamia*’ in *Keats the Poet*, pp. 292-309 (p. 293).

⁵ Shelley, ‘*Prometheus Unbound*’ in *The Major Works*, pp. 229-313.

⁶ Michael O’Neill, ‘*Lamia*: “Things Real – Things Semireal – and No Things”’ in *The Challenge of Keats Bicentenary Essays 1795-1995*, ed. by Allan C. Christensen, Lilla Maria Crisajulli Jones, Giuseppe Galigani, Anthony L. Johnson, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 125-142 (p. 129).

⁷ Adam Phillips, *On Flirtation* (London: Faber, 1994), p. xvii.

making the reader experience the same pollution of bliss that leads to Lycius's death and Lamia's disappearance.

Hermes and 'Amorous Theft'

From the opening lines of *Lamia*, the pursuit of sensual gratification governs the action of the poetic narrative. Keats establishes the impurity of pleasure through the 'amorous theft' (I, 8) of 'The ever-smitten Hermes' (I, 7). The introductory episode of Hermes and the Nymph is not incidental to the poem, but is a means by which Keats sets up the gordian knot of poetic interpretation; the relationship between pleasure and truth becomes the site in which Keats thinks through the difficulties of the hermeneutic. As the 'patron saint of thieves' and one of 'cupid's slaves',⁸ Hermes becomes the character through which trickery and deception are initially aligned with erotic and romantic desire so that the search for pleasure is presented as an illicit and transgressive act:

The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner (I, 7-11).

The idea of manipulating and controlling the vision of others is established early in the poem. Hermes's ability to deceive Jove is paradoxically facilitated by concealing himself in light rather than hiding in darkness, as we might expect of the 'star of Lethe' (I, 81) and the 'god of dreams'.⁹ Hermes's attraction to the 'sweet nymph' (I, 30) not only leads him to abandon his 'golden throne' (I, 8) and forgo his celestial responsibilities, but also to trespass into the domains of the other gods through the act of theft. Warren Stevenson argues that Hermes is presented as the 'antitype to his brother Apollo',¹⁰ whose role as sun-god is encroached upon when Hermes purloins light from 'high Olympus' (I, 9). It is through the use of metre and rhythm that Keats illustrates this tension between the Hermetic and the Apollonian in the opening of the poem. In line 10, Keats disrupts the regular iambic pentameter of the heroic

⁸ Jane Chambers, "'For Love's Sake': 'Lamia' and Burton's Love Melancholy", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 22 (1982), pp. 583-600 (p. 591).

⁹ Warren Stevenson, 'A Stab at the Gordian Knot', *Studies in Romanticism*, 11 (1972), pp. 241-252 (p. 242).

¹⁰ Stevenson, 'A Stab at the Gordian Knot', p. 242.

couplet through the use of an extra syllable. In order to rhyme the nouns ‘light’ and ‘sight’ on the stressed syllable of the fifth foot, thereby preserving the musicality of the couplet, the reader must elide the first and second syllables of the fourth foot so as to avoid creating a hyperbeat. The three syllables of ‘to escape’ are awkwardly squeezed into the space of a single iamb so that the vowel sound ‘e’ is concealed within the rhythm of the fourth foot, literally escaping or breaking outside of the limits of the iambic pentameter. As ‘Phoebus Apollo is god of music, poetry, prophecy, and healing’,¹¹ Apollonian light can be understood to uncover truths through the insights and musings of poetry and music, the prophetic gaze of the healer, and through illuminating that which is unknown or hidden from view. Yet, rather than providing knowledge and understanding, the rhythm and musicality of poetry obscures truth; Hermes misuses and subverts the light of Apollo so that it masks reality by dazzling and confusing the onlooker to the point of blurred vision. Light, for Keats, does not necessarily illuminate reality, but also dazzles to blind the reader. By using Apollonian light to veil truth, Keats does not figure Hermes as an antitype to Apollo as Stevenson proposes, but creates a troubling proximity between the two figures. In the same way that Keats deliberately fails to distinguish between ‘The poet and the dreamer’ (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 200) in *The Fall of Hyperion*, a poem that he was revising and working on alongside *Lamia* in July 1819, Keats unites the roles of Hermes and Apollo, establishing an anxiety that poetry might create illusions and mask as much as uncover truths.

The framing narrative of Hermes and the Nymph establishes a tension between poetry’s ability to reveal and conceal. Richard E. Palmer explains how: ‘the term “hermeneutics” continue[s] to suggest an interpretation which discloses something hidden from ordinary understanding and mysterious’,¹² drawing upon Heidegger’s *On the Way to Language* by arguing that ‘To interpret is first to listen and then to become a messenger of the gods oneself, just as the poets do’.¹³ As an interpreter of Keats’s poetry, the reader enters into the uncertain and liminal world of Hermes, in which he figures both as a messenger that attempts to uncover and disclose the truths behind the text as well as a trickster who has the potential to falsify and create illusions. Keats anticipates Hans Georg Gadamer’s approach to hermeneutics by presenting truth as an unreliable concept. Truth is flexible in *Lamia* because poetic meaning is dependent upon the

¹¹ Stevenson, ‘A Stab at the Gordian Knot’, p. 242.

¹² Richard E. Palmer, ‘The Liminality of Hermes and the Meaning of Hermeneutics’, <<https://www.mac.edu/faculty/RichardPalmer/liminality.html>> [accessed 13/5/2016].

¹³ Palmer, ‘The Liminality of Hermes’.

consciousness of the reader. For Gadamer, interpretation can only ever be conducted within the limitations of a person's pre-existing experiences, an idea explained through the concepts of 'prejudices' and 'horizons': 'The historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience'.¹⁴ The meanings that we uncover in a text are both limited and enabled by the consciousness of the reader which is made up of the totality of our prior experiences; interpretation cannot be performed outside of those experiences. Commenting upon the emergence of European hermeneutics in the works of Schleiermacher in the Romantic period, Tilottama Rajan explains how there was 'a shift in Romantic aesthetics from concern with a text as a finished product that contains its own meaning to a concern with the creative process and its mirror image, the reading process, as loci of meaning'.¹⁵ As David Haney argues, Romantic poetry anticipates Gadamer's suggestion that 'the signifier within the text points to a signified that is always already absent';¹⁶ meaning is located outside of the text and within the minds of both the author and the reader. If meaning is dictated by the 'horizon' of each individual reader as Gadamer proposes, then poetic truth becomes a multiple and amorphous concept.

This multiplicity of meaning is suggestive of the contradictions and complexities that are central to the enigma of Lamia. In the opening of the poem, for example, the reader's initial interpretation of pleasure's status as an illicit and immoral bodily indulgence is dependent upon Keats's alliance of sexual gratification and thievery within the term 'amorous theft'. 'Amorous' is used as an adjective to describe the type of thieving that Hermes' is intent upon; Keats highlights 'the predatory nature of Hermes' pursuit of the nymph' against the nymph's desire to keep her innocence and beauty 'unaffronted, unassail'd' (I, 101) and hidden from 'the love-glances of unlovely eyes' (I, 102).¹⁷ But Keats also uses melodic language in the description of Hermes's theft of light to demonstrate the god's excitement in the act of stealing itself. Throughout lines 7 to 11, the use of assonance in the lower frequency 'oh' and 'or' sounds in the words 'golden', 'throne', 'amorous', 'Olympus', 'stolen' and 'Jove' as well as the speed and swiftness denoted in the use of sibilant consonants suggests that it is the stealing of light from 'high Olympus' (I, 9) that Hermes also luxuriates in. Despite Keats providing us with two

¹⁴ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. by David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1976), p. 9.

¹⁵ Tilottama Rajan, 'The Supplement of Reading', *New Literary History*, 17 (1986), pp. 573-594 (p. 575).

¹⁶ David Haney, 'Viewing "the Viewless Wings of Poesy": Gadamer, Keats, and Historicity', *Clio*, 18 (1989), pp. 103-122 (p. 108).

¹⁷ Stevenson, 'A Stab at the Gordian Knot', p. 243.

examples of Hermes' pleasure, it is easy for the reader to overlook the joy of stealing that the passage also communicates. Keats draws attention to the swiftness of Hermes and the speed of the hermeneutic by demonstrating how the reader can misinterpret or miss altogether important details and nuances of a text. For Keats, the weight of interpretive responsibility remains with the reader. The reader is accountable for the interpretation of the text so that the pollution of pleasure is partly dependent upon our illicit imaginations and understanding of the poem.

As with *The Eve of St Agnes*, Keats subtly manipulates the vision of the reader so that we are implicated in the same transgressive and impure pleasure as Hermes. Paul Endo comments that 'In *Lamia*, power consists of silently controlling what another sees without this other ever knowing that he or she is being watched and controlled'.¹⁸ The control of vision not only operates at the level of the poetic narrative as Endo implies, but also at the level of authorial control. Despite Keats's continual reminder that the nymph remains 'unseen', the reader frequently catches themselves imagining the nymph as she 'prepar[es] her secret bed' (I, 30) and as she bathes 'Fast by the springs' (I, 17). Keats's poetic presence and power over our imaginings goes unnoticed as he indirectly guides us into envisaging the nymph's naked and voluptuous body:

[...] her pleasant days
 She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
 Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet:
 From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
 She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen: (I, 95-99).

At this point in the poem, these lines are spoken by Lamia who utilises her powers of eloquence to win over Hermes with a seductive description of the Nymph in order to facilitate her wish to acquire 'A woman's shape' (I, 118). Hermes is 'charmed' (I, 112) by an evocative and sensual portrayal of the Nymph that is suggestive of bodily gratification. Lamia draws upon the taste of pleasure, the soft sound of 'nimble feet' in grass, the smell of sweet flowers, the sight of green branches, and the delicate touch of plucking. The Nymph is pictured amongst 'thornless wilds' (I, 95) in a scene of unadulterated pleasure that recalls Eve's indulgence in an Edenic landscape. Lamia depicts the Nymph in a liminal state between innocence and

¹⁸ Paul Endo, 'Seeing Romantically in *Lamia*', *ELH*, 66 (1999), pp. 111-128 (p. 116).

forbidden knowledge, when she is plucking fruit ‘From weary tendrils’. Much like Lamia, who will be described as ‘A virgin purest lipp’d, yet in the lore / Of love deep learned to the red heart’s core’ (I, 189-190), the Nymph is desirable because of her implied status as an innocent and untouched virgin even as she possesses illicit knowledge and understanding of the sexual. By articulating this erotic description indirectly through Lamia, Keats seems to position the reader as a passive witness to Lamia’s enticement of Hermes. Yet in continually emphasising what is not seen, Keats forces the reader to imagine the private, undescribed spaces of the Nymph’s body, thereby implicating us in the same sexual fantasising as Hermes. The description of the Nymph is set up as a blazon that begins by describing her tongue and mouth through the image of tasting, but ends almost immediately with the depiction of ‘nimble feet’ (I, 96). Keats only describes the extremities of the Nymph’s body so that we are required to fill in the middle portions of her torso for ourselves in order to gain a full picture of the Nymph in her nakedness. Although it seems the reader is witnessing Lamia control Hermes through language, Keats conceals his own manipulation of the reader’s imaginings by articulating this erotic description indirectly through a poetic character. Keats’s eloquence troublingly calls attention to our own voyeuristic perversity.

Dazzling Hues and Kaleidoscopic Identities

It is not only the duplicity of language, but also Lamia’s complex and shifting physiology that the reader is both seduced by and suspicious of throughout the poem. Like Hermes, Lamia’s dazzling nature also resists the interpretation of the reader. Lamia’s crest is ‘Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne’s tiar’ (I, 58) so that she shimmers and shines:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
 Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
 Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
 Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr’d (I, 47-50).

The radiance and vacillation of Lamia’s many-sided nature is reflected in Keats’s excessive listing of diverse colours and features that continues for the full 20 lines of this verse paragraph. Keats emphasises Lamia’s exoticism and multiplicity through the richness of his poetic language. The use of the compound adjective ‘vermillion-spotted’, for example, consists of five syllables to encompass half of the iambic pentameter of line 48, appearing at the beginning of the line to create a polysyllabic, internal half-rhyme with the adjective ‘gordian’. Keats

creates a mixture of aural and oral harmonies in this passage by blending together hard and soft consonants, drawing attention to the sensory pleasure of reading the poem aloud. The plosives of ‘gordian’, ‘dazzling’, ‘golden’, ‘green’, ‘blue’, ‘pard’, ‘peacock’ and ‘barr’d’ explode off of the tongue and lips even as the softness of the sibilants and fricatives ‘she’, ‘hue’, ‘shape’, ‘spotted’, ‘striped’, ‘zebra’ and ‘freckled’ draw attention to the gentle movement and vibration of air within the mouth, through the teeth and over the lips. Much like our fascination with Lamia’s ‘woman’s mouth’ (I. 60), the reader’s attention is repeatedly drawn towards that which is ‘smooth’lipp’d’ (I. 83). Exploiting the sensory pleasures of orality, Keats creates a variety of sensations within the mouth so that the reader is seduced by the beauty and sensuousness of poetic language, luxuriating in the contrast of sounds and colours that function to build our interest and excitement. Yet it is just as poetic utterance entices the reader’s curiosity and fascination that Keats denies us the pleasure of fully understanding the complexities of this scintillating depiction. Lamia’s aesthetic appeal is rooted in her bright and ‘dazzling’ colours, but the overlapping of different ‘hues’ and patterns in Keats’s description also makes her difficult to envisage.¹⁹ The interlacing of spots and stripes alongside the layering of red, gold, green, blue, the black and white of the zebra, the yellows and browns of the leopard, and the purple and turquoise of the peacock mean that gaining an overall image of what Lamia looks like is almost impossible; like a chameleon, the luridness and hybridity of Lamia’s animal colours paradoxically work to camouflage her. The reader is placed within an impossible framework of interpretation in which we can only focus on one element of Lamia’s nature at a time, even as each feature of her character must be considered in relation to an intersecting quality to be fully understood. Much like her ‘rainbow-sided’ (I, 54) appearance, the different facets and colours of Lamia’s nature overlap and bleed into one another so that they cannot be seen with clarity or shoe-horned into neat and limitable categories of identification.

Keats implicitly aligns Lamia with Iris: the goddess of the rainbow, messenger of the gods, and counterpart to Hermes. In their discussion of rainbows within art, myth, and science, Raymond L. Lee and Alistair B. Fraser explain how in Greek mythology, including Homer’s *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, Iris conveyed messages between mankind and the gods, using ‘the rainbow [...] [as] her transient pathway’.²⁰ According to Lee and Fraser, ‘the commonest depiction of the

¹⁹ Endo also highlights how ‘The colors and lights glancing off of Lamia paradoxically hide rather than illuminate her’. Endo, ‘Seeing Romantically’, p. 121.

²⁰ Raymond L. Lee Jr. and Alistair B. Fraser, ‘The Bridge to the Gods’ in *The Rainbow Bridge: Rainbows in Art, Literature and Science* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp. 2-33 (p. 21).

rainbow is as a snake' so that Lamia's association with Iris is strongly hinted at in Keats's poem.²¹ Like Hermes, Lamia's alliance with Iris confronts the reader with the same problems of interpretation that Gadamer discusses in *Truth and Method*. For Gadamer, every act of interpretation is conditioned by our prejudices or the limitations of our horizons. Yet, Haney points out that: 'the horizon of the interpreter is continually being formed' by our moment-by-moment experiences so that as Gadamer argues: 'The horizon is [...] something into which we move and that moves with us'.²² Interpretation is not only dependent upon the limitations of the reader's horizons, but our horizons are also conditioned and expanded by our encounter with and experience of the language we are attempting to interpret. According to Gadamer, understanding occurs for the reader when our prejudices come into dialogue with a new or alien horizon: 'understanding is always the fusions of these horizons' between the known and unknown,²³ the familiar and the unfamiliar. As goddess of the rainbow, Iris is perhaps a more appropriate representation of Gadamerian hermeneutics than Hermes in that the rainbow's fusion of colours and borders is indicative of the coming together of these horizons. In his reading of 'Ode to a Nightingale', Haney argues:

[Keats's Ode] can be read as a meditation on the process of interpretation that occurs when the speaker's limited "horizon," as Gadamer would call it, is tested and reformulated in a dialogue with the similarly fluid horizon of the interpreted nightingale.²⁴

Written within months of the Nightingale Ode, *Lamia* explores the ambiguities that arise in the process of interpretation when the reader's pre-existing prejudices fail to fuse or work in dialogue with a new horizon that is presented by the poem. Pointing out the importance of prolepsis in Gadamerian hermeneutics, Haney explains that as the reader's horizon expands with the movement of the text, 'each gesture in understanding involves a projection of the anticipated whole, based on the prejudices in place at the time'.²⁵ Yet, as we encounter and progress through each line of *Lamia*, the reader's projected interpretation of the poem and the meanings of Lamia's nature is continually challenged and contradicted by a viewpoint that is

²¹ Lee and Fraser, 'The Bridge to the Gods', p. 22; In book III of *Endymion*, Keats describes the rainbow as 'the bow/ Of Iris' (*Endymion*, III, 850-851).

²² Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Edition, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward Ltd, 1989), p. 304.

²³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 306.

²⁴ Haney, 'Viewing "the Viewless Wings of Poesy"', p. 111.

²⁵ Haney, 'Viewing "the Viewless Wings of Poesy"', p. 114.

out of keeping with the reader's prejudices. Just as we are told of Lamia's status as 'some penanced lady elf' (I, 55), for example, Keats immediately undercuts this suggestion of victimhood by telling the reader that she might also be 'the demon's self' (I, 56). The reader cannot fully interpret or categorise Lamia's nature as a predatory animal or a victimised human because like Iris, she occupies a liminal or hybrid space between worlds or horizons in which meaning is in the process of translation. Jane Stabler argues that the initial description of Lamia's 'dazzling hue' (I, 47), 'shows Keats's preoccupation with volatile, fluctuating beauty: Lamia's scales "dissolve" and "interwreath" different colours. The indeterminacy of her shape is attractive, but also dangerous'.²⁶ But Keats's obsessive interwreathing of colours not only conveys the 'gordian shape' (I, 47) of Lamia's physiology in the way Stabler indicates, but also the difficulty of unweaving the complexities and contradictions that make up her entire character. Lamia is simultaneously frightening and attractive because of that which is obscure, unknown or temptingly hinted at in her dissolving nature.

The Unfulfilled Desire of Negative Capability

It is Keats's indeterminacy of meaning and refusal to define Lamia's nature that forces the reader to adopt the negatively capable imagination that Keats articulates in a late December 1817 letter to his brothers:

I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason — Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193-194).

The 'uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts' that Keats's letter sets forth resonates with late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century accounts of terror, even as it anticipates later theoretical approaches to flirtation. Keats's theory of negative capability is set up in response to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, which was published in 1817, the same year as Keats wrote this letter. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge argues that the poet should aim to reconcile

²⁶ Jane Stabler, 'Romantic Poetry' in *Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.99-157 (p. 119).

‘opposite or discordant qualities’ through a synthetic imagination.²⁷ But Keats suggests that reaching after reconciliations and conclusions can lead to the ‘verisimilar’; that which appears true, but is ultimately spurious. For Keats, Coleridge ignores openness and multiplicity, avoiding ‘doubts’ by pushing forward a singular or ‘isolated’ philosophical axiom that fails to account for tensions and incongruities. Keats’s letter proposes that we must remain ‘content’ and at ease with contradictions, oppositions, and discord, leaving our minds open to that which we do not know or fully understand. Anticipating Gadamer, Keats shows that poetic meaning is paradoxically facilitated by the reader’s encounter with an unknown and unfamiliar horizon. For writers such as Edmund Burke, Ann Radcliffe, and Anna Letitia Barbauld, such uncertainty and obscurity are conditions that lead to experiences of terror. Burke writes: ‘To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary’.²⁸ In her essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ (1826), Radcliffe also argues that terror is ‘a negative, which leaves the imagination to act upon the few hints that truth reveals to it’ (150).²⁹ Radcliffe’s conception of terror echoes Keatsian negative capability as a beneficial state which ‘expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life’,³⁰ developing the mind and imagination beyond the certainties of fact and reason to reach for knowledge and experience that is otherwise unavailable. Similarly, Barbauld’s essay *On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror* (1773), also argues that terror, like negative capability, keeps our minds and imaginations open and continually ‘on the stretch’ by confronting us with the obscure or unknown.³¹ According to Barbauld, the reader suffers ‘The pain of suspense’ and fear during narratives of terror because the reader cannot resist the ‘desire of satisfying curiosity’;³² the pleasure of terror derives from the anticipation of discovering that which is unknown. Yet it is the satisfaction of curiosity that Keats rejects. Unlike Radcliffe’s and Barbauld’s formulations of terror and the supernatural gothic, the ambiguity of negative capability does not necessarily produce a pleasurable fear in the reader. Instead, the reader encounters and endures a frustration that is also analogous with theoretical approaches to flirtation. Negative capability suspends the reader in a painfully pleasurable state of anticipation that is never relieved, much like the ‘Bold

²⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Biographia Literaria’ in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Ninth Edition, Volume D, The Romantic Period*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), pp. 488-499 (p. 496).

²⁸ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 58.

²⁹ Ann Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16 (1826), pp. 145-152 (p. 150).

³⁰ Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, p. 149.

³¹ John and Anna Laetitia Aikin, ‘On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Betrand, A Fragment’ (1773) in *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1773), pp. 119-137 (p. 125).

³² Aikin, ‘On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror’, p. 123.

lover' on Keats's Grecian Urn who 'never canst [...] kiss, / Though winning near the goal' ('Ode on a Grecian Urn', 17-18).

Keats's depiction of negative capability also anticipates and engages with contemporary theories of flirtation. In her reading of 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', Geraldine Friedman comments upon the 'eroticized drama of interpretation' that the poem stages,³³ arguing that 'in our frustrated attempts to understand an attractive but elusive poem, we, as readers, re-enact the speaker's sexual urgency as he tries to penetrate the mysteries of the "still unravish'd bride of quietness"'.³⁴ Friedman's analysis of the ode deftly shows how 'the urn itself acts most like a seductive woman, "teas[ing] us out of thought" (44)'.³⁵ But it is this 'eroticized' encounter with impenetrable mysteries that is also a central element of Keats's investigation of negative capability so that Friedman's argument can be extended beyond the parameters of the ode and into Keats's wider poetic practice. In *Lamia*, the reader's interpretive gaze is also directed towards an enigmatic seductress so that the poem's 'uncertainties, mysteries, doubts' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193) are characterised by a dynamics of flirtation. As Adam Phillips argues, the consciously or unconsciously 'calculated production of uncertainty' places readers in the sadomasochistic realm of flirtation in which excitement and anticipation are 'inextricable from tantalization' (xvii).³⁶ Flirtation 'eroticizes the contingency of our lives by turning doubt — or ambiguity — into suspense' (xvii). Similarly, Keats employs negative capability in *Lamia* to playfully tease the reader, promising them the 'wild ecstasy' of understanding even as he leaves them in 'mad pursuit' ('Ode on a Grecian Urn', 10 and 9) of unfinished interpretation. *Lamia* dramatises negative capability's ambivalent status between flirtation and terror, presenting us with a character who is 'at once' a beautiful and alluring 'lady elf' (I, 55), temptingly filled with boundless potential for pleasure, as well as 'the demon's self' (I, 56), whose indeterminate nature hints at something dangerous and latently terrifying. It is the act of thinking itself that *Lamia*'s negative capability emphasises, a state that renders us 'forever panting' ('Ode on a Grecian Urn', 27) with unsatiated desire, even as it confronts us with the terror of ambiguous and metamorphosing bodies 'convuls'd with scarlet pain' (I, 154).

³³ Geraldine Friedman, 'The Erotics of Interpretation in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn": Pursuing the Feminine', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32 (1993), pp. 225-243 (p. 225).

³⁴ Friedman, 'The Erotics of Interpretation', p. 226.

³⁵ Friedman, 'The Erotics of Interpretation', p. 230.

³⁶ Phillips, *On Flirtation*, p. xvii.

Interlocking Binaries

Lamia's dizzying poetry toys with the reader, leaving us exhausted by our futile attempts at grappling with conflicts that appear to be resolvable, but refuse to be reconciled. Keats collapses multiple binaries of identification, demonstrating the frustration of inhabiting a state in which knowledge is promised but never realised; the more the reader attempts to untie the knot of *Lamia*'s 'gordian shape' (I, 47), the more we are ensnared in the complexities and contradictions of the poem. Whereas Coleridge attempts to collapse binaries of identification by finding a likeness between seemingly oppositional concepts, in *Lamia* Keats resists categorising the experience of reality into strict and recognisable terms so that a proximity between differing concepts is also established. Greg Kucich emphasises Keats's inheritance of Spenserian duality to argue for the centrality of unresolved conflicts in his poetic process.³⁷ Tamsin Theresa Badcoe similarly argues that 'For Keats, as for Spenser before him, romance offered a mode in which to contemplate irreconcilable dualities'.³⁸ Yet in *Lamia*, Keats creates a kaleidoscope of interconnected binaries in which the collapsing of one set of oppositions is dependent upon the mingling of another pair of contraries. In the opening description of *Lamia*'s appearance, the interwreathing (I, 52) of human and animal features establishes a mingling of male and female identities, thereby complicating Keats's presentation of pleasure:

[...] he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.
[...]
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock (I, 45-50).

From line 47, *Lamia* is categorised as a female through the use of the gendered pronouns 'her' and 'she'. Yet, in the opening description of her physiological appearance, *Lamia* is compared to animals that are colourful, exotic, and traditionally associated with masculinity. *Lamia* is not only aligned with the predatory aggression of the snake and leopard,³⁹ but also with the

³⁷ Greg Kucich, *Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

³⁸ Tamsin Theresa Badcoe, "'The porch of that enchanted gate": Spenserian Influences and the Romance of Place in *Lamia* by John Keats', *Romanticism*, 17 (2011), pp. 351-364 (p. 354).

³⁹ *Lamia*'s fluid and indeterminate gender status, alongside her association with serpents recalls Ovid's depiction of Tiresias in *The Metamorphoses*; a text that Keats drew upon while writing *Lamia*. Tiresias was transformed from a man into a woman after striking two mating serpents with his staff. After 7 years living as a woman, Tiresias again encountered the same pair of mating serpents and after striking them for a second time, returned to his masculine form. The relationship between snakes and fluid gender identities is a long established tradition in

ostentatious display of the peacock, whose presentation of brightly coloured feathers typically functions as an overt performance of male sexuality, designed to attract the attention and sexual desire of the female peahen. Keats uses animals to draw attention to Lamia's performance of identity, making it uncertain as to whether she gazes with the eyes of a male or female, snake or human. Such an emphasis on the performance of sexuality anticipates and advances Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott's understanding of gendered pleasure. In their discussion of sexual arousal, Jackson and Scott draw upon Pasi Falk to explain that while 'male bodies evidentially signify arousal/pleasure through erection and ejaculation',⁴⁰ the lack of physical signs in female sexual stimulation makes it necessary 'to "act" desire and pleasure' to provide evidence of enjoyment for the benefit of the other.⁴¹ Jackson and Scott highlight an ambiguity at the centre of female pleasure: it is uncertain whether the physical and verbal signs of female orgasm are performed or exaggerated acts that bear no correlation to internal bodily sensations, or if they are genuine symptoms of pleasure. By confusing images of male and female arousal, Keats makes it uncertain whether Lamia's pleasure is real or faked for the purpose of attracting and manipulating both Hermes and the reader: 'Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet! / She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete' (I, 59-60). The presentation of Lamia as a 'palpitating snake' (I, 45) directly casts her within the image of a throbbing and erect phallus so that her sexual arousal and masculine status appear to be beyond doubt. However, this crude depiction of masculine pleasure is immediately undermined by the foregrounding of Lamia's 'woman's mouth' (I, 60) that is seductively parted to reveal perfectly white teeth. Lamia is grotesque in that she not only fantastically combines 'portions of human and animal forms',⁴² but also is simultaneously monstrous and fascinating to look at. In his analysis of *Isabella*, Michael Sider draws upon Bakhtin to explain how 'the grotesque suggests a *limen*, a state of being somewhere between forms or identities. [...] To exist on the threshold of identity is to refuse the stasis of an imposed definition'.⁴³ In *Lamia*, Keats also 'stresses the irrationality' of Lamia's hybrid form which is grotesque in its refusal to be contained within pre-existing

literature that Keats is drawing upon and contributing to. Ovid, Book III of *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. by Mary M. Innes (Baltimore: Penguin Books Ltd, 1955), p. 89.

⁴⁰ Stevi Jackson, Sue Scott, 'Embodying Orgasm: Gendered Power Relations and Sexual Pleasure', *Women & Therapy*, 24 (2002), pp. 99-110 (p. 105).

⁴¹ Jackson, Scott, 'Embodying Orgasm', p. 105.

⁴² 'Grotesque', *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/81794?rskey=817OXv&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 3/6/2016].

⁴³ Michael Sider, 'Isabella and the Dialogism of Romance', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 22 (2000), pp. 329-356 (p. 347).

identity categories of male and female,⁴⁴ animal and human. Our ‘bitter-sweet’ (I, 59) reaction to Lamia is dependent upon her embodied duality and fluid identity that is both attractive and disturbing, whereby her alluring mouth and compelling eloquence attracts the reader’s desire even as it jars against the animality of her physiological appearance.

It is the bitter-sweetness of embarrassment that Christopher Ricks notices in the most sensuous passages of Keats’s poetry. Ricks’s investigation primarily focuses on *Endymion* and Keats’s earlier works to argue that the deployment of embarrassment moves beyond Keats’s poetic narratives to implicate ‘us in the hot tinglings of sensation’.⁴⁵ Keats was criticised by early reviewers of *Endymion* for ‘the gross slang of voluptuousness’ that characterised his ‘cockney’ poetics,⁴⁶ but we can also see Keatsian embarrassment working upon the reader in his later works. The genitalic features that characterise Lamia’s phallic snake body and the vaginal connotations of her ‘smooth-lipp’d’ (I, 83) mouth evoke embarrassment within the reader by which we become uncomfortable with and self-conscious of our own delight in the erotic nature of Keats’s diction. Keats draws our attention back to the mouth not only as a site of slippery bliss (*Endymion*, II. 758) and sexual potential, but also as a location of ‘rosy eloquence’ (I, 82) that performs a ‘brilliance feminine’ (I, 92); we cannot discern whether Lamia’s pleasure is real or affected. Lamia’s effortless ability to alternate between a ‘mournful voice’ (I. 35) to speaking words that come ‘as through bubbling honey, for Love’s sake’ (I. 65) makes the reader doubt the honesty of her actions and intentions. Her open mouth also reinforces the suggestion of heavy breathing, whereby we are told that ‘as she breathed’ the ‘silver moons’ on her fascinating snake skin ‘Dissolv’d, or brighter shone’ (I. 51-52). Although this physical display of breathlessness could be the act of a weeping creature whose body is ‘touch’d with miseries’ (I, 54), Lamia’s open-mouthed panting is also suggestive of orgasm and arousal, indicative of someone who has the ability to ‘move in a sweet body fit for life, / And love, and pleasure’ (I, 39-40). Keats makes the reader question whether Lamia is genuinely mournful, sexually aroused, or if she is performing her victimhood in order to draw our attention to a heaving chest whose movement accentuates and reveals the femininity of her slender form. The reader is left bewildered and unable to identify whether our poetic focus should be directed towards: the uncertain differentiation between the animal and the human; the problem of gender; the

⁴⁴ Sider, ‘*Isabella* and the Dialogism of Romance’, p. 347.

⁴⁵ Christopher Ricks, ‘Keats, Byron, and “Slippery Blissess”’, *Keats and Embarrassment*, pp.69-114 (p. 83).

⁴⁶ ‘Review in the British Critic (June 1818)’ in *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by G. M. Matthews (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1971), pp. 91-96 (p. 94).

doubleness of language; the mystery of sexual stimulation; or, the embarrassment of our delight in male and female pleasure. By having his poem explore all of these ambiguities simultaneously, Keats dramatises the reader's failure to remain content with 'half-knowledge' so that the real issue under interrogation is our response to a poem that elucidates and obscures meaning itself.

Sympathy and the Pleasures of Wilful Deception

It is not only the reader's response towards Lamia that is emphasised in the poem, but also our engagement with the wider problem of poetic sympathy. Sperry argues that Keats 'tilts the balance of sympathy in her [Lamia's] favour when she comes to appear persecuted and pathetic'.⁴⁷ But by making the reader aware of her performative nature, Keats compromises our sympathy for Lamia so that we mistrust her implied victimhood, doubt her honesty, and question the validity of our pity for her:

She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self (I, 55-56).

Lamia's twin identities as snake and human, female victim and male persecutor, 'penanced lady elf' and 'demon's self' resist certain interpretation, muddying the pleasure we perceive Lycius to experience. The use of simile, which usually functions as a comparative aid to understanding, distances the reader from comprehending Lamia's nature so that it is difficult to frame the question or problem under interrogation. The reader's sympathy towards Lamia is dependent upon whether she is a woman who was transformed into a serpent at the hands of a cruel demon or if she is a supernatural being whose transformation from a snake into a human facilitates her desire to seduce and manipulate Lycius. As Rachel Schulkins argues: 'She is both a woman trapped in a serpent's form and a serpent trapped in a woman's physique'.⁴⁸ Lamia tells Hermes that she 'was a woman, let me have once more / A woman's shape' (I, 117-118), describing her animal body as a 'serpent prison-house' (I, 203). But the reader is also informed that Lamia deliberately wins Lycius's 'heart / More pleasantly by playing woman's part' (I, 336-337). Lycius's seduction is ostensibly dependent upon Lamia hiding her dual identity and superhuman powers to perform the part of a woman so that Lycius's pleasure

⁴⁷ Sperry, 'Comic Irony', p. 308.

⁴⁸ Rachel Schulkins, 'The Humanisation of the Serpent Lamia' in *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation*, pp. 127-148 (p. 134).

appears to be founded upon a lie. Yet as Sperry notes: ‘any reasoned balance of sympathies, not to mention taking sides, is out of the question’ in this poem.⁴⁹ Just as the first book closes and the reader comes to consider Lamia as a deceiving ‘lady elf’ (I, 55), Keats opens the second book of the poem by having Lycius tell Lamia that he considers her: ‘Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny’ (II, 87). Lamia’s serpent identity may stay unknown until the end of the poem, but Lycius is nevertheless informed of her extraordinary nature, her ‘many senses’ (I, 284), ‘hundred thirsts’ (I, 285), ‘complicated physiology of sensation and sophisticated psychology of feeling’.⁵⁰ Lycius remains aware of Lamia’s superhuman status even as he delights in hearing ‘her whisper woman’s lore so well’ (I, 325) so that he can, in part, be understood as willingly deceived by Lamia as part of a flirtatious role play that the two enact throughout their first encounter:

So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
 More pleasantly by playing woman’s part,
 [...]
 Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
 Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh (I, 336- 341).

For Lamia and Lycius, affected behaviour is about the maximisation of pleasure; there is more sexual potential in the ‘throbbing blood’ (I, 308) of a human body than there is in the ‘subtle fluid’ (I, 307) that flows in the mysterious form of a goddess. The use of the adjective ‘eloquent’ (I, 340) is indicative of an agenda that motivates Lycius’s self-conscious sighing and the verb and adjective ‘marrying’ and ‘twinborn’ also suggest a doubleness of intention that underlies Lycius’s swooning love-sickness. Lycius is responsive to Lamia’s performance, matching or even rivalling ‘every word’ (I, 341) and aspect of her behaviour with a ‘twinborn sigh’ (I, 341) from the same affective origins as Lamia’s performed womanhood. Yet, whereas the reader is directly told of Lamia’s performativity, Keats only hints at the artificiality of Lycius’s response so that we are left with just a suspicion of Lycius’s knowing engagement in Lamia’s role-play. Keats repeatedly makes us doubt our judgements by shifting the poetic focus away from textual details that support our misgivings. The reader is told that ‘Jove heard his [Lycius’s] vows, and better’d his desire’ (I, 229). Rather than straightforwardly controlling and

⁴⁹ Sperry, ‘Comic Irony’, p. 309.

⁵⁰ De Almeida, ‘Apollo’s Power of Life: Sympathetic Genius’ in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, p. 296.

deceiving Lycius, Lamia is also presented as a pawn in Lycius's appeal to the Gods for pleasure. Lamia can be seen as no more than a reward for Lycius's sacrificial devotion to Jove so that her behaviour could be governed by Lycius's hedonism. But this important textual detail is easily disregarded as an incidental fact in the narrative or even evidence of Lamia's spying and prophetic knowledge of Lycius's whereabouts. Endo, for example, writes that Lycius's praying to Jove illustrates his latent 'desire to be charmed';⁵¹ a desire that makes him vulnerable to Lamia's magic and implicates him in his own unconscious self-deception. Endo shifts the blame back to Lamia's supernatural influence over Lycius, failing to notice the conscious self-deception that characterises the behaviour of both characters throughout their first encounter. Keats continues to cultivate the reader's doubt by making it uncertain whether we are unfairly creating blame or discovering fault in Lamia. We become cynical readers who are mistrustful of the appearance of truth and reluctant to sympathise with either Lamia or Lycius.

Gender and the 'Camelion Poet'

The issues of sympathy, gender, and the performance of femininity in *Lamia* calls attention to the problems inherent in Keats's wider poetic practice. Anne K. Mellor draws upon the psychoanalytical feminism of Nancy Chodorow and Julia Kristeva to argue that Keats self-consciously identifies the creative mind of the 'camelion poet' with the female gender, a self that is characterised as 'permeable, continually overflowing its boundaries, melting into another, and being filled by another'.⁵² By embodying his poetic voice within the shifting nature and physiology of a serpent lady, Keats initially appears to demonstrate the fluid identity of the 'camelion poet', who is 'continually in for — and filling some other Body —' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387). In his 27th October 1818 letter to Richard Woodhouse, Keats places the 'camelion poet' in opposition to 'the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387). In the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, Wordsworth's aim of utilising the balladic tradition to speak in 'the real language of men' appears to be removed from the solipsism Keats attacks.⁵³ But Anne Janowitz shows how 'Wordsworth's ventriloquising of customary culture authorises the theorisation of the "lyrical ballad", at the very moment at which it is being superseded by the demands of individualism'.⁵⁴ For Janowitz, the centrality

⁵¹ Endo, 'Seeing Romantically', p. 123.

⁵² Anne K. Mellor, 'Keats and the Complexities of Gender' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2004), pp. 214-229 (p. 216).

⁵³ William Wordsworth, 'Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)' in *The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) pp. 595-615 (p. 595).

⁵⁴ Anne Janowitz, 'Ballad, Lyrical Ballad, Lyric: Wordsworth, Dyer and Mill' in *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 33-61 (p. 36).

of the lyric 'I' in the lyrical ballad means that the language of 'Low and rustic life' that Wordsworth is attempting to voice is always filtered through the mind of the poet,⁵⁵ constituting a ventriloquising of the 'language really used by men'.⁵⁶ Rather than privileging a certain class of language, the mind of the poet, or the perspective of 'men', Keats suggests that his poetic character:

is not itself — it has no self — it is every thing and nothing — It has no character — it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated — It has as much delight conceiving an Iago as an Imogen (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387).

In his discussion of Romantic heroism, Paul A. Cantor writes that the male poet 'establish[es] his creative imagination as the center of the universe',⁵⁷ arguing that 'The sublime is not in the objects themselves but in our consciousness'.⁵⁸ Yet Cantor fails to recognise that it is the poet's struggle to overcome the self-centredness of the 'human mind's imaginings' ('Mont Blanc', 143) that characterises much of the poetry of the period.⁵⁹ Intuiting how Shelley critiques Wordsworth's poetic imagination by emphasising the flawed and narcissistic gaze of the poet of *Alastor*, Keats resists placing his own mind and thoughts at the centre of his poetry. Instead, Keats emphasises the importance of the poet's sympathetic imagination, extending Burke's suggestion that the sympathiser must lose their own identity to undergo 'a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and [are] affected in a good measure as he is affected'.⁶⁰ Burke's language is overtly gendered in his *Enquiry*. Yet Keats's desire to conceive of both an Iago and an Imogen broadens the scope of who and what is worthy of sympathy. Modelling himself upon Shakespeare, Keats suggests that the camelion poet must expand their imagination to identify with and virtually enter into the sensations of men, women, the malicious duplicity of an Iago and the beauty and dignity of an Imogen. In *Lamia*, the hybridity of Lamia, physically rendered by her phallic serpent body with a beautiful woman's mouth, seemingly represents Keats's abandonment of his male identity and adoption of a female subject position. The pain of Lamia's metamorphosis, for example, is described with

⁵⁵ Janowitz, 'Ballad, Lyrical Ballad, Lyric', p. 290.

⁵⁶ Janowitz, 'Ballad, Lyrical Ballad, Lyric', p. 289.

⁵⁷ Paul A. Cantor, 'The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism', *The Review of Politics*, 69 (2007), pp. 375-401 (pp. 398-399).

⁵⁸ Cantor, 'The Politics of the Epic', pp. 398-399.

⁵⁹ Shelley, 'Mont Blanc' in *Percy Bysshe Shelley The Major Works*, pp. 120-124.

⁶⁰ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical*, p. 21.

such vivid detail that her foaming mouth, writhing movements, and convulsing muscles appear to be indicative of Keats's intimate understanding of and identification with Lamia's sensations:

Left to herself, the serpent now began
 To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
 Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,
 Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent (I, 146-149).

Lamia's seclusion and privacy is established at the beginning of the metamorphosis stanza in which the reader is given an exclusive overview of Lamia at her most ugly (I, 164) and vulnerable. Keats does not begin this depiction of Lamia's transformation by making the reader deduce what the external markers of her actions and movements signify. Instead, Keats graphically details the internal workings of her pulsating and burning blood, whereby the unbearable agony that torments her from within bubbles up and explodes out of her once compelling woman's mouth for all to view. Keats juxtaposes the unvoiced dental and labial fricatives 'th' and 'f' in the phrase 'mouth foam'd' and 'th' and 'b' in 'therewith besprent', forcing the reader's tongue, teeth and lips together so quickly that we too might spit and foam at the mouth while reading this passage aloud. The reader cannot suffer the same torment as Lamia or know what it is to have the 'elfin blood' (I, 147) of a superhuman being, but Keats's masterful use of poetic language is so rich at this moment in the poem that the reader is partly able to undergo the same physiological experiences as Lamia. Keats is not only interested in occupying the role of the camelion poet, but also in attempting to create camelion readers who are able to identify with that which is alien to them.

Whereas female pleasure is obscure and unknown in the poem, Keats presents female pain as an undeniable certainty. Jeremy Davies' work draws upon the novels of the Marquis de Sade to explain that "Pleasure's effects, in women, are always uncertain [...] hence, pain must be preferred, for pain's telling effects cannot deceive";⁶¹ for Sade, pain externalises female subjectivity and makes it tangible for men. By having Lamia froth at the mouth in her serpent form, Keats similarly refigures female pain into an image of phallic ejaculation and male pleasure. Mellor argues that Keats 'succeeds in "cross-dressing," in occupying the subject

⁶¹ Jeremy Davies, 'Sade's Unreason' in *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature*, pp. 67-96 (p. 84).

position of the female, but he is not a “transsexual”: he cannot *become* the female’.⁶² Yet Mellor’s position fails to pay sufficient attention to the subtleties and ambiguities of Keats’s presentation of gender. The central image of Lamia as half animal and half woman can also be interpreted as a representation of the male subject’s inability to lose his phallic identity as he speaks on behalf of the female or animal ‘other’. The ambivalent image of Lamia as a serpent-woman demonstrates Keats’s awareness of the potential for the camelion poet to slip from conscious transvestitism to a failed transsexuality that constitutes nothing more than a male appropriation of the feminine. The camelion poet threatens to become guilty of the same ventriloquism and egotism of the Wordsworthian speaker.

It is in his role as letter writer that Keats’s complex attitude to gender jars against his camelionic position. In his 1st July 1819 letter to Fanny Brawne, Keats does not delight in being entangled in the identity of an Imogen or the beauty of Fanny Brawne, but resists identification with the feminine by inscribing female submissiveness and asserting the dominant identity of the male:

Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. Will you confess this in a Letter you must write immediately and do all you can to console me in it [...] write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been (*Letters: John Keats II*, 123).

Keats’s letter was written in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight at the time Keats was composing *Lamia*. Jennifer Wawrzinek links this letter to Keats’s conception of the camelion poet, arguing that ‘The letter to Fanny describes Keats’s memory of her as so vivid and intense that her presence begins to press upon the poetic self to the extent that Keats describes his contemplation of her as a form of imprisonment’.⁶³ In the same way that Keats resists the weight of Tom’s identity pressing upon him in the 20th September 1818 letter to Dilke, Keats’s apparent identification with Fanny becomes a form of ‘pain’ and ‘oppress[ion]’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 123) that he asks to be relieved of or consoled in. Yet, Keats’s camelionic wish to enter into the feminine subject position in his letter to Woodhouse collides with his sexual

⁶² Anne Mellor, ‘Ideological Cross-Dressing — John Keats/Emily Bronte’ in *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 171-208 (p. 183).

⁶³ Jennifer Wawrzinek, ‘John Keats and the Ethics of Disappearance’, *Anglia-Zeitschrift Fur Englische Philologie*, 128 (2010) pp. 431-445 (p. 432).

frustration and desire for Fanny in this letter. As Nicholas Roe notes: ‘While he [Keats] longed for her [Fanny] “moistened and bedewed with pleasures”, circumstances dictated otherwise’.⁶⁴ With no steady income or means of marrying Fanny, Keats was forced to take up cheaper lodgings at the Isle of Wight, where he redoubled his literary activity in the hopes of successful and lucrative publication. Entrammelled in the remembrance of ‘so fair a form’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 123), Keats’s imaginative entanglement in Fanny’s beauty is not straightforwardly about the forfeiting of personal identity and camelionic identification with the feminine in the way Wawrzinek proposes. Keats’s oppressive imaginings are concentrated around Fanny’s physical body; her lips, the obsession with her beauty, and the wish to ‘centre my Happiness in you [Fanny]’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 123) so that the vivid remembrances that Wawrzinek aligns with sympathetic identification are more indicative of Keats’s erotic fantasising, his desire to enter Fanny’s body through the sexual act. Byron famously commented that Keats’s poetry enacts ‘a sort of mental masturbation — he [Keats] is always frigging his imagination’ and the reader can also see this mental onanism demonstrated in the letter to Fanny.⁶⁵ In *Keats, Modesty, and Masturbation*, Rachel Schulkins draws upon Laqueur to argue that ‘excessive individuality such as masturbation renounces social relations and turns to a solipsistic privacy’.⁶⁶ The entrammelling that Keats describes is not so much about the substitution of personal identity with the feminine as a solipsistic retreat into the imagination and the desire to gratify masculine sexual pleasure. The weight of Fanny’s identity pressing upon Keats paradoxically reaffirms his masculine identity.

Pained by the teasing prospect of intimacy, Keats attempts to curb his unhappiness or madness (*Letters: John Keats II*, 122) by reasserting control over his imaginings and reinstating the despotic presence of the male poet or lover. Margaret Homans writes that this letter demonstrates Keats’s ‘ventriloquizing [of] a woman reader’ and ‘appropriation of Fanny’s voice’.⁶⁷ The tyrannical tone of this letter makes for uncomfortable reading. The use of the imperative ‘must’ and the directives ‘do’, ‘console’, ‘write’, and ‘kiss’ show Keats’s desire to manipulate and speak through the voice of another. Keats attempts to control both the content of Fanny’s letter and the speed of her response, placing her in the position of a criminal or

⁶⁴ Nicholas Roe, ‘Hope and Chance’ in *John Keats*, p. 327

⁶⁵ Byron, *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, p. 225.

⁶⁶ Schulkins, ‘Introduction: Keats and the “Masturbating Girl”’ in *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation*, pp. 1-16 (p. 4).

⁶⁷ Margaret Homans, ‘Keats Reading Women, Women Reading Keats’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 29 (1990), pp. 341-370 (p. 351).

‘penanced lady’ (I, 55) by first asking her and then commanding her to confess to a cruelty that is outside of her control. However, the will to control Fanny by making her ‘write the softest words’ is not straightforwardly an assertion of male dominance on the part of Keats, but can also be seen as an act of flirtation. Much like Lycius, who wishes to ‘reclaim / Her [Lamia’s] wild and timid nature to his aim’ (II, 70-71) in the hope that ‘she lov[es] the tyranny’ (II, 81), Keats exercises the dominance and authority of the male lover in order to ease his sexual frustration and woo Fanny by conducting a kiss that overcomes the barriers of time and distance. Commenting upon Byron’s art of flirtation in his personal and poetic lives, Corin Throsby highlights ‘the performance-making and attention-getting nature’ that characterises flirtation,⁶⁸ both in written works and in verbal interactions. While we can similarly see Keats’s flirtatious desire for romantic attention in this letter, the misogynistic despotism of the lover outweighs suggestions of performance and role-play. Fanny may be free to disagree with Keats’s accusations, but by using such commanding language, Keats forces Fanny to react to his request in some way so that he nevertheless directs the content of her next letter. Despite suggesting that Fanny has destroyed his freedom, it is Keats who denies Fanny freedom of communication in her responding letter. The cross-dressing Mellor identifies is not simply about entering into the female subject position in this letter, but about enacting multiple gender roles simultaneously. Sympathy becomes more than a gesture of openness by means of anticipating the responses of one’s interlocutors, but it is also a means of controlling their possible range of reactions. This ambiguous potential, between generous openness and despotic control, lies at the heart of *Lamia*’s gender politics.

Lamia’s Metamorphosis and the Problem of Female Pain

In *Lamia*, Keats remains sensitive to the continuing presence of the male poet’s imagination, highlighting an inability to know with certainty the somatic sensations of the female. Sympathy requires an act of imagination on the part of the sympathiser rather than the certainty and knowledge of experience that has come to be associated with empathy. The sympathetic imaginings of the camelion poet relocate him within his mind’s eye so that he remains unable to negate or abstract himself completely from his own identity. As Lamia sheds the phallic connotations of the snake and transforms into ‘a maid’ (I, 185), Keats makes it increasingly difficult to identify with her experiences and sensations. The gendered pain of Lamia’s

⁶⁸ Corin Throsby, ‘Being Neither Here Nor There: Byron and the Art of Flirtation’ in *Byron’s Ghosts: The Spectral, The Spiritual and the Supernatural*, ed. by Gavin Hopps (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 202-214 (p. 202).

metamorphosis is hinted at through Keats's careful choice of words. The striking image of Lamia 'convuls'd in scarlet pain' (I, 154), for example, is at once visceral and frustratingly abstract and open to interpretation. The adjective 'scarlet' initially seems to describe an agony generated from Lamia's 'elfin blood' (I, 147). Yet it is uncertain whether 'scarlet pain' is a depiction of Lamia's internal sensations or of how her convulsing body looks to the gaze of an observer. Keats's description can also be understood as showing Lamia flushed with the effort and distress of writhing, wherein the blood that rises to the surface of the skin reinforces the depiction of a form whose 'colours are all inflam'd' (I, 153). That the metamorphosis depicts a painful engendering of 'A full-born beauty' (I, 172) also intimates Keats's alliance of Lamia's writhing and 'scarlet pain' with childbirth. Critics such as Sperry have commented upon Lamia's metamorphosis as an act of poetic creativity, arguing that Lamia 'represents a power closely akin to imagination'.⁶⁹ Mellor also shows how Keats repeatedly 'locates poetic creation in the realm of the feminine, identifying it with pregnancy'.⁷⁰ But critics have yet to align Lamia's powers of creativity and painful metamorphosis with childbirth. The verb 'convuls'd' (I, 154) that describes the involuntary contraction of Lamia's muscles is indicative of labour pangs,⁷¹ by which the adjective 'scarlet' might also hint at the bleeding that occurs during childbirth; scenes which Keats would have been familiar with during his time as an apprentice apothecary and medical student.⁷²

E. Douka Kabitoglou investigates Keats's platonic references in *Lamia*,⁷³ reading the poem as 'Keats's Symposium' and responding to Sperry's suggestion that *Lamia*'s 'poetic and sexual themes, both broadly imaginative in their concern are inseparable'.⁷⁴ Sperry and Joseph C. Sitters also note Keats's engagement with Plato in *Lamia*,⁷⁵ commenting upon Lycius's dwelling in 'platonic shades' (I, 236) and Keats's annotations on platonic love in the margin of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* from which Keats encountered the story of Mennipus Lycius and Lamia.⁷⁶ However, these critics fail to comment upon Keats's engagement with

⁶⁹ Sperry, 'Comic Irony', p. 299.

⁷⁰ Mellor, 'Ideological Cross-Dressing', p. 175.

⁷¹ See 'Convulse' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40898?rskey=4etFX5&result=3&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 18/8/16].

⁷² See de Almeida, 'The London Medical Circle' in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, p. 25.

⁷³ E. Douka Kabitoglou, 'Lamia as Keats's Symposium' in *Plato and the English Romantics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), pp. 125-135 (p.125).

⁷⁴ Sperry, 'Comic Irony', p. 300.

⁷⁵ Joseph C. Sitters, "'Platonic Shades" in Keats's Lamia', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 83 (1984), pp. 200-213.

⁷⁶ See Sperry, 'Comic Irony', p. 300.

Diotima; a figure that aligns procreation and poetic creation in the same way that Sperry notices in *Lamia*. In *The Symposium*, Diotima suggests that ‘mortal nature does all it can to live forever and to be immortal. It can only do this by reproduction. [...] This applies not only to the body but also to the mind’ in that ‘Wisdom and other kinds of virtue [...] are brought to birth by all the poets’ (207d-209a).⁷⁷ For Diotima, poets can ensure their immortality and the continuation of their thoughts by giving birth through the imagination to great works of art, an appealing theory for a poet concerned with posterity, ‘the fame of poetry’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 369), and poetic legacy. Yet, the movement between the bodily and the eternal that Diotima stages in *The Symposium* becomes a point of ambiguity in *Lamia*. Keats makes it unclear whether the reader should view the metamorphosis scene as a poetic space in which we are asked to identify with and investigate the meanings of female labour pains, or if childbirth is used as a means by which Keats allegorises the difficulty of poetic creation and expression for the male poet. Critics such as Denise Gigante argue that, like the Apollonian poet of *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, Lamia’s painful metamorphosis constitutes a convulsive dying into life (*Hyperion*, III, 129-130) that suggests ‘a life lived beyond the fact of physical existence’.⁷⁸ For Keats, the Apollonian poet obtains ‘knowledge enormous’ (*Hyperion*, I, 113) and undergoes ‘alterations and perfectionings’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 103) through experiences of suffering, recreating those thoughts through a poetic expression that endures beyond the physical existence of the poet. While Keats can empathise with the pain of poetic creation, he can only imagine or sympathise with the torment of childbirth that Lamia appears to undergo. The indeterminate meaning of the phrase ‘scarlet pain’ (I, 154) shows Keats at his most poetically enigmatic and engaging, but it also highlights his deliberate dramatising of the male poet’s inability to describe with complete clarity and understanding the sensations of the female by which the reader is also unable to sympathise with or fully comprehend Lamia’s torment.

The pain of metamorphosing from a serpent lady into a woman may be described in vivid detail, but it is also dramatically depicted amongst the fireworks of ‘phosphor and sharp sparks’ (I, 152) that issue from Lamia’s ‘torture fix’d’ (I, 150) eyes. Jane Stabler and Richard Holmes read Lamia’s agonising metamorphosis ‘in semi-scientific terms, as if Keats were observing a violent chemical experiment in a laboratory’.⁷⁹ Sperry also notices how ‘A sort of chemical

⁷⁷ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans by. Christopher Gill (London; Penguin Books Ltd., 1999), pp. 45-46.

⁷⁸ Denise Gigante, ‘Keats’s Principle of Monstrosity’ in *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (London: Tale University Press, 2009), pp. 208-246 (p.239).

⁷⁹ Stabler, ‘Romantic Poetry’ in *Burke to Byron*, p. 120; Richard Holmes, ‘Dr Frankenstein and the Soul’ in *The Age of Wonder* (London: Harper Press, 2008), pp. 305-336 (p. 325).

analysis of separation of elements takes place' during the metamorphosis.⁸⁰ It is through this imagery of chemical abstraction that Keats represents the separation of genders within Lamia. Lamia's transformation into a 'lady bright' (I, 171) and removal from the phallic figure of the snake can also be understood as a moment in which the male poet attempts to abstract or separate himself from his own identity. Keats does not depict Lamia's metamorphosis with the reasoned and objective gaze of a chemist, but has the reader witness the mystery of Lamia's extraordinary experiences without providing an explanation as to how this seemingly scientific process is occurring. The alchemy of Lamia's transformation into a 'lady bright' (I, 171) shrouds her emotions and sensations even deeper in mystery and obscurity, culminating in her sudden disappearance:

Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, 'Lycius! Gentle Lycius! (I, 165-168).

As she transforms into her human female form, Lamia paradoxically becomes more ambiguous and other-worldly. Lamia moves from the searing 'pain and ugliness' (I, 164) of an intense heat that physically melts her away, to the gentleness of a melodic 'luting' voice that contains all the allure and desire of a lover or seductress. Lamia's sudden disembodiment removes her from view, leaving the reader with nothing more than the sibilance of a ghostly, hissing voice and no evidence as to how and why such a striking change in behaviour and sensation has occurred. The reader must identify with that which is unknown or removed from view at this moment of the poem, by which Keats illustrates how the sympathy of the camelion poet and reader is dependent upon a negatively capable imagination. Homans, amongst other Romantic scholars, aligns Keats's poetic notion of negative capability with his conception of the camelion poet without any clear explanation as to how these two theories relate to one another. Despite conflating Keats's ideas on the camelion poet and negative capability by suggesting that 'Negative capability means [...] identifying with Imogen as much as Iago',⁸¹ Homans's alliance of the two ideas is not without foundation. For Keats, the camelion poet must remain 'content with half knowledge' because sympathetic identification is dependent upon a gap

⁸⁰ Sperry, 'Comic Irony', p. 302.

⁸¹ Homans, 'Keats Reading Women', p. 345.

between the experiences of the sympathiser and the sympathised with; the camelion poet cannot know with any certainty the sensations of the other, but should nevertheless ‘delight’ in conceiving of or imagining their experiences. As Wawrzinek argues, Keats’s poetic ‘character is enabled by and generated from a relation to the inherent mystery of the unknown, or what he otherwise refers to as “negative capability”’.⁸² Even if the male poet were to succeed at forfeiting or abstracting himself from his personal identity, the feminine other nevertheless remains an unknown that is beyond understanding and camelionic identification. At the end of the metamorphosis stanza, the reader is not provided with a concrete image of Lamia’s new appearance or character. Unlike her ‘gordian shape’ (I, 47), which is described in minute detail, Lamia’s human form is obscure and inexact, wherein we learn only of an abstract feminine beauty that is ‘full-born, [...] new and exquisite’ (I, 172). The reader is left guessing as to what Lamia’s new body looks like, whether she has retained any of her dazzling serpentine features or if she even has a physical body at all. Gender becomes an important site of ambiguity and an ‘ever twisted braid’ (I, 186) of possibility that Keats leaves open to exploration.

‘To Unperplex Bliss from its Neighbour Pain’

The reader’s inability to identify with Lamia is further complicated by her superhuman status. In ‘Ode on Melancholy’, Keats writes that ‘in the very temple of Delight / Veiled Melancholy has her sovereign shrine’ (‘Ode on Melancholy’, 25-26), presenting the confusion of pleasure and pain as a distinctly human or mortal problem, embedded in a temporal existence of life, death, and sensory experience. Despite inhabiting a world and a body that endures ‘the ruddy strife / Of hearts and lips!’ (I, 40-41), Lamia is separated from the reader by her superhuman ability to disentangle bliss from pain. Keats’s failure to describe the specific features of Lamia’s appearance is set against a lengthy description of 15 lines that details her extraordinary capacity to ‘unperplex’ (I, 192), ‘define’ (I, 193), and ‘estrangle’ (I, 193) complexities and contradictions. Keats emphasises the importance of this aspect of Lamia’s character by depicting it within an isolated stanza that digresses from the progress of narrative events at this point in the poem. Whereas the reader is teased by incomplete interpretation and an inability to resolve tensions, Lamia’s ‘sciental brain’ (I, 191) effortlessly differentiates between pleasure and pain or the complexities of human experience so that, as ‘a lovely graduate’ (I, 198) of ‘Cupid’s college’ (I, 197), she is both physically and mentally satiated and fulfilled. Lamia’s

⁸² Jennifer Wawrzinek, ‘John Keats and the Ethics of Disappearance’, p. 432.

new-born body contains all the earthly and sexual potential of a human female or ‘virgin purest lipp’d’ (I, 189) even as she retains the knowledge and insight of a goddess:

Not one hour old, yet of sciental brain
 To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
 Define their pettish limits, and estrange
 Their points of contact, and swift counterchange (I, 191-194).

The process of abstraction that characterises the metamorphosis scene foregrounds Lamia’s powers of separation and ‘sciental’ knowledge. Throughout the poem, the complexities and contradictions of Lamia’s character are beyond the reader’s ability to categorise or understand, leading critics to align her with the ‘shifting lights and colours’ of the seemingly illusory and illogical imagination.⁸³ Yet Lamia’s ability to ‘define’, ‘limit’, and separate experiences and sensations in the same way that Sperry suggests of the Romantic scientist, appears to contradict the notion that she is above the logic and reason of ‘cold philosophy’ (II, 230). Noel Jackson highlights how ‘The beguiling serpent purports to distinguish fully between pleasure and pain so as to eliminate what Wordsworth calls their “infinite complexity” (Preface, LB, 258)’.⁸⁴ But Lamia’s ability to separate pain and pleasure does not eliminate or unweave their infinite complexity for the reader in the way Jackson implies. Keats’s use of the negative verb ‘unperplex’, for example, describes Lamia’s ability to separate, disentangle, and categorise her experiences. Yet, the prefix ‘un’ also defines this word in relation to its opposite, paradoxically drawing attention to the idea of perplexity and suggesting an enigmatic quality that is resistant to exact definitions. Although Lamia is able to ‘define’, ‘limit’, and understand the complexity of pleasure and pain, the reader is not granted access to this secret knowledge and ability. The confusion of pleasure and pain remains intact for the reader, thereby deepening the mystery around Lamia’s nature even further by failing to show how a creature new to the sensations of the human body can distinguish between its most complex experiences. Commenting on these lines of the poem, Endo argues that Lamia ‘is as committed as Apollonius is to the taxonomic logic associated with reason and science’.⁸⁵ Yet Lamia’s ‘sciental brain’ (I, 191) does not simply convey a scientific understanding and categorisation of emotion and sensation, but is

⁸³ Sperry, ‘Comic Irony’, p. 299.

⁸⁴ Noel Jackson, ‘John Keats and the Sense of the Future’ in *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 165-196 (p. 193).

⁸⁵ Endo, ‘Seeing Romantically’, p. 117.

also indicative of her elfin magic or the omniscience of a goddess; it is with ‘sure art’ (I, 196) that the ‘most ambiguous atoms’ (I, 196) are parted. Lamia does not unweave complications through ‘taxonomic logic’, but by her supernatural otherness.

The Deceptive Pleasures of Lamia’s Wedding

It is Lamia’s ability to ‘unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain’ (I, 192) that enables her to entice Lycius on ‘To unperplex’d delight and pleasure’ (I, 327), creating an alternative reality that, up to the second part of the poem, is unthreatened by the ‘Misery and heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and Oppression’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 281) that Keats associates with human experience. Richard Macksey reads Lamia’s ‘purple-lined palace of sweet sin’ (II, 31) as ‘unrelated to the world’,⁸⁶ occupying an illusionary state which the peal of the trumpet disrupts. Betsy Winakur Tontiplaphol also argues that ‘When distant Corinth’s trumpets make Lycius “start” (II, 28), they simultaneously puncture the bubble of pleasure that Lamia has so carefully inflated’.⁸⁷ Yet, the second book of *Lamia* is not straightforwardly about the intrusion of truth or the pains of social reality upon the pleasures of illusion, but the intersection and confusion of these two principles. Lamia’s mystical construction of a wedding bower and ‘glowing banquet room’ (II, 121) appears to exemplify how she uses her supernatural powers to create a world of fallacious and ‘doubtful’ (II, 117) origins that deceives others by appealing to and gratifying their sensory pleasures:

She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but ‘tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors (II, 115-118).

Lamia is initially shown utilising her skills to mask the ‘misery’ (II, 116) and pain of reality, distracting the wedding guests from the ‘knotty problem’ (II, 160) of her double nature with magnificent luxuries of ‘haunting music’ (II, 122) and ‘Teeming [...] odours’ (II, 133). The scent of ‘spiced wood’ (II, 176), the taste of ‘sweet wine’ (II, 211), and the touch of the ‘cold full sponge’ (II, 192) that presses upon hands and feet create a ‘nectarous cheer’ (II, 207) that appeals to the human appetites and is anchored in the sensory reality of each wedding guest.

⁸⁶ Richard Macksey, ‘Keats and the Poetics of Extremity’, *MLN*, 99 (1984), pp. 845-884 (see footnotes p. 859).

⁸⁷ Betsy Winakur Tontiplaphol, ‘Introduction’ in *Poetics of Luxury in the Nineteenth Century: Keats, Tennyson, and Hopkins* (Routledge: New York, 2016), pp. 1-24 (p. 15).

Yet, the illusory nature of these luxurious ‘charm[s]’ (II, 124) is repeatedly emphasised throughout the sequence in Keats’s allusions to a ‘faery-roof’ (II, 123), ‘mimicking’ (II, 125 and 181), and ‘viewless servants’ (II, 136); that which is real to the senses jars against the charms of Lamia’s illusory magic. Keats’s description of ‘subtle servitors’ with noiseless ‘wings’ (II, 120) who aid the work of a woman bent on obscuring that which is miserable or ugly, bears a striking resemblance to Belinda’s toilet routine in Canto I of *The Rape of the Lock*. In Pope’s poem, Belinda’s ‘busy sylphs surround their darling care’ (*The Rape of the Lock*, I, 145) to create a ‘purer blush’ (*The Rape of the Lock*, I, 143) upon her cheeks so that she is more desirable to those who gaze upon her.⁸⁸ Like Belinda’s beauty, the pleasures of Lamia’s wedding banquet occupy a liminal status between nature and artificiality, truth and illusion; a tension that Keats succinctly contains within the verb ‘to dress’ (II, 115). Lamia’s ability ‘to dress’ misery does not straightforwardly present a process of falsification. Rather, it suggests that she adorns that which already exists, highlighting how man’s sensory perceptions of external reality are easily manipulated. Kucich reminds us, ‘Dryden’s vigorous couplet style modelled the verse of *Lamia* (KL 2.165)’ so that we know Keats was revising and reflecting upon the heroic couplet form during his composition of the poem. Pope’s mastery of the form provided another vital influence on Keats’s treatment of the heroic couplet. Like Pope, Keats has a profound respect for and mastery over poetic form, even as he aspires to overcome its limitations, as evidenced in his metapoetic engagement with the sonnet form in ‘If by Dull Rhymes Our English Must be Chain’d’. Poetic form paradoxically becomes the means by which Keats attempts to transcend the fetters of artifice and reflect upon the complexities of truth and nature. In *Lamia*, Keats manipulates the heroic couplet to demonstrate how the reader’s experience of truth can be as unreliable and as ‘artificial’ as Pope’s rendering of Belinda’s blush:

She did so, but ‘tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors (II, 117-118).

Keats disrupts the form of the heroic couplet in lines 115-118 by setting the syntax of the lines against the couplet’s rhyme scheme. While line 117 formally makes a couplet with line 116

⁸⁸ Alexander Pope, ‘The Rape of the Lock’ in *Alexander Pope The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 77-100. All subsequent references to the poem will hereafter be cited parenthetically.

through the rhyming of the words ‘magnificence’ and ‘whence’, it is syntactically paired with line 118; Keats’s couplets cannot be considered in isolation as catchy epigrams, but must be understood within the context of the entire section. Keats neatly contains line 117 within the regular iambic pentameter of heroic verse. Yet, the careful use of a medial pause in the second iambic foot of the line splits apart the unstressed syllable from the ictus, wherein the reader is required to pause at the comma so as to maintain the integrity of the syntax. In so doing, the line is resumed on the stressed syllable ‘but’ so that the line begins to sound trochaic, even though it can be formally scanned within the limits of iambic pentameter. The use of enjambment in line 117 and a caesural pause after the first syllable of line 118 contributes to this trochaic feel, destabilising the duality of the couplet form even further by making the natural break in our reading come midway through the first foot of line 118 after the word ‘Came’, rather than at the end of each line, as the reader expects. These lines require a double mental function from the reader in which we are made to hear two conflicting metres simultaneously. Keats innovates upon the heroic couplet in order to manipulate the reader’s sensory experience of hearing the poem read aloud, highlighting how our understanding of the world and truth as we perceive it can be paradoxical, ‘doubtful’, and experienced in different ways by individuals. Unlike Belinda, whose Sylphs have the freedom and agency to retire (*The Rape of the Lock*, II, 143-146) from enhancing and protecting her beauty, both Keats and Lamia retain absolute authority over their art; Lamia’s supernatural creatures are her ‘servants’ (II, 136) who she ‘Mission[s]’ (I, 136) and controls. Whereas Belinda’s artificial beauty is framed to satirise and ridicule a society in which ‘mighty contests rise from trivial things’ (*The Rape of the Lock*, I. 2), Lamia’s control over others and her capacity to manipulate sensory perception is not humorous, but a point of serious consideration for Keats’s readers. Lamia’s ability to conjure a magnificent structure of ‘wide-arched grace’ (II, 121) and ‘fresh carved cedar’ (II, 125), supported solely by ‘haunting music’ (II, 122), demonstrates a strength and power that is unsettling. Keats does not directly present Lamia as a threat to Lycius’s safety, nor does the reader see her powers used to destructive ends. But Lamia’s power over pleasure also suggests her potential to inflict pain in equal measure; her status as both ‘penanced lady elf’ (I, 55) and ‘demon’s self’ (I, 56) opens her to both extremities. How easily the human senses are deceived by pleasure is a source of excitement as well as fear.

Intoxication becomes a central example of pleasurable deception in the poem. Keats’s presentation of intoxication in the second part of *Lamia* demonstrates how the artificial can heighten our experience of pleasure, even as it dangerously alters and thwarts how we

experience the world around us. The taste, smell, and feel of ‘sweet wine’ (II, 211) that smoothly slips down the throats of Lycius and his wedding guests creates a somatic pleasure that paradoxically affects a sensation of disembodiment in which ‘every soul from human trammels [is] freed’ (II, 210). Kostas Boyiopoulos explains that in Romantic presentations of intoxication, ‘excess of sensual pleasure can lead to toxic poison, sensuous overload can lead to emptiness of feeling’.⁸⁹ It is as the ‘happy vintage touch[es] their brains’ (II,203) that the wedding guests become pleasurably uninhibited by the limitations of the body, removed from the realities of the external world, and relocated within a mind that is dizzyingly altered by the ‘nectarous cheer’ (II, 207) of alcohol. In *Lamia*, the consumption of wine demonstrates how pleasure can poison the body, producing real physiological changes upon the human brain that corrupts the ways in which we perceive the world:

But when the happy vintage touch’d their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments (II, 203-205).

In *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, Alan Richardson shows how scientists in the Romantic period drew upon intoxication to dismantle a long-standing belief in Cartesian dualism. Whereas Descartes presented the body as distinct and disconnected from the mind, intellectuals of the Romantic period, such as the biologist George Combe, placed the mind within the body by highlighting how the consumption of material substances, such as “‘wine, opium, and nitrous oxide gas, [impact] on the mental manifestations’”.⁹⁰ At this moment in *Lamia*, Richardson argues: ‘It is unclear whether the music grows louder as the players compete with the louder talk, or (at least initially) only appears louder to an artificially heightened sensory system’.⁹¹ In the same way that the wine makes the wedding guest’s blood rush to their ‘Flush’d [...] cheeks’ (II, 214) and their ‘bright eyes double bright’ (II, 214), Keats shows how the material and chemical composition of the brain can be artificially altered so that sound is perceived and experienced differently from a mind that is sober. The uncertainty that Richardson identifies, between accurate sensory perception and drunken illusion, is not only

⁸⁹ Kostas Boyiopoulos, “‘Enchanted Wine’”: Symons, Dowson and Keats’s Intoxications’ in *Decadent Romanticism: 1780-1914*, ed. by Kostas Boyiopoulos and Mark Sandy (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 59-74 (p. 73). For a fuller discussion on the relationship between intoxication and numbness, see the ‘Odes’ chapter on pp. 177-215.

⁹⁰ Richardson, ‘Coleridge and the New Unconscious’ in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, pp.39-65 (p. 53).

⁹¹ Richardson, ‘Keats and the Glories of the Brain’, pp. 114- 150 (p. 143).

experienced by the clouded judgement of the inebriated wedding guests, but is an ambiguity that Keats also recreates for the reader. Keats's careful use of grammar and syntax makes the reader share in the wedding guests' uncertain perception of sound, thereby simulating the effects of intoxication. The poetry shifts from the past tense in line 203 to the present tense in line 204, including the reader in the moment-by-moment unfolding of events and positioning us amongst the drunkenness and revelries of the wedding guests. The adjective, verb, and pronoun positioning in line 204 is also inverted so that the adjective 'louder' is repeated at the beginning of each clause to emphasise the power and noise of the guest's sensory experience. The repetition of a trochaic word with an open and low-frequency vowel sound creates the impression of a growth in volume. The ictus of the trochee is placed on a diphthong which stresses and elongates the first syllable so that it seems our voices rise in intensity at the beginning of the repeated word, even if the volume of our speech remains the same; language, like alcohol, can alter our perception of reality, heightening the experiences of the sensory system. Just as the Nightingale's song creates 'a drowsy numbness' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 1) akin to the effects of a 'dull opiate' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 3), Keats uses the orality and musicality of poetic expression to replicate the experience of intoxication for the reader. Commenting upon 'the Romantic idea of inebriating art' and Keats's 'poetics of intoxication',⁹² Boyiopoulos argues:

Intoxication in Keats pervades the poetic process, producing cyclicity between the self, the senses, and expression. In Nietzsche's words, "the effect of works of art is to excite the state that creates art — intoxication".⁹³

If there is a circularity and reciprocity between the self, the senses, and poetic expression in the way that Boyiopoulos proposes, then we can understand Keats to extend Combe's thinking. It is not only material substances that can alter the ways in which the brain perceives external reality, but also the properties of language, the spoken word, and 'strains' (II, 204) of powerful music.

Despite alcohol's illusionary effects, it is the artificial heightening of the sensory system that creates a more intense experience of pleasure for the wedding guests. The musical instruments

⁹² Boyiopoulos, "'Enchanted Wine'", p. 67 and p. 61

⁹³ Boyiopoulos, "'Enchanted Wine'", pp. 62-63.

rise in volume, play with greater intensity, and appear more ‘powerful’ (II, 205) to the guests once they have imbibed: ‘for merry wine, sweet wine, / Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine (II, 211-212). By rhyming ‘wine’ and ‘divine’, Keats creates a subtle pun on the adjective ‘divine’ so that it not only suggests something heavenly, but also that which relates to the ‘vine’ or the grape, highlighting how the consumption of wine can transform the mundane into an experience of pleasure and happiness as exquisite as Elysium. As a qualified apothecary, Keats had an intimate understanding of how drugs, opiates, and alcohol simultaneously function in both pleasurable and harmful ways. It is the use of the word ‘too’ in this couplet that also suggests excess, as if the wedding guests move beyond an enhanced and more pleasurable perception of reality to a space that is dangerously otherworldly or even hallucinogenic. It is at this moment in the poem, when ‘God Bacchus [is] at meridian height’ (II, 213), that Lamia presents herself at the banquet, maximising upon the wedding guests’ inability to differentiate between the real and divine so that she does not appear to be ‘so strange’ (II, 211). Unable to perceive the world accurately, the wedding guests are unaware of the potential threat Lamia possess, failing to detect her double nature amidst the dizzying pleasures of the feast.

The Fallacy of Apollonius

Unlike Lycius and the wedding guests, Apollonius is presented as a figure who is removed from the pleasures and revelries of the banquet, retaining the seemingly sober and objective gaze of a sophist and sage that can see into Lamia’s double nature where others cannot. Apollonius’s ability to ‘solve and melt’ (II, 162) the ‘knotty problem’ (II, 160) of Lamia’s double nature leads critics such as Sperry to consider him as a figure of reason and ‘cold philosophy’ (II, 230), representative of a Newtonian science that reduces the colours of the rainbow to ‘the dull catalogue of common things’ (II, 233).⁹⁴ Sperry argues for Apollonius’s status as ‘the unlyric Apollo, the power of science and healing isolated from any saving touch of humor, compassion, or genuine benevolence, a cross between Apollo and Polonius’.⁹⁵ Despite his astute observation of Keats’s word play, Sperry fails to flesh out how Shakespeare’s rendering of Polonius influences Keats’s depiction of Lycius’s mentor, instead directing his critical attention to the scientific element of Apollonius’s name and how this comes to bear

⁹⁴ Nicholas Roe draws upon Haydon’s Notebook to explain how at the ‘Immortal Dinner’ of 28th December 1818, Keats and Lamb agreed that Newton “‘had destroyed all the Poetry of the rainbow, by reducing it to a prism”, where upon they all drank “Newton’s health, and confusion to mathematics!””. Nicholas Roe, ‘The Year of *Endymion*, 1817’ in *John Keats*, pp. 161-215 (p. 201).

⁹⁵ Sperry, ‘Comic Irony’, p. 304.

upon images of ‘the thermometer and the prism’ in the poem.⁹⁶ Whereas the philosopher and scientist traditionally arrive at understanding through objectivity and ‘consequitive reasoning’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 185), Polonius is repeatedly wrong in his judgements throughout *Hamlet*, making grand and verbose claims of wisdom that are often comically erroneous.⁹⁷ Keats makes the reader mistrust Apollonius’s judgement and perception of truth, without any comedy to endear us to his character. As Sitters reminds us: ‘Keats [...] calls Apollonius a Sophist deliberately, to undermine Apollonius’ claim to know what is real and what is illusory’,⁹⁸ as Keats draws upon the double meaning of the word ‘sophist’ as both a ‘wise or learned man’ and ‘One who makes use of fallacious arguments’.⁹⁹ Apollonius’s dogmatic and narrow claim that Lycius is nothing more than ‘a serpent’s prey’ (II, 298) is not in keeping with the reader’s experience of Lamia’s gordian nature. While Apollonius’s sensory experiences appear to be unaltered by the intoxicating effects of wine, this does not validate his perception of reality which fails to account for the complexities of a character that is repeatedly shown to be both ‘sweet and virulent’ (I, 149). Rather than resolving tensions or providing understanding in the way expected of philosophers and scientists, Apollonius is a figure who creates even more unanswered questions and ambiguities in the poem. The reader does not know why Apollonius can see through Lamia’s human form and into her serpentine nature, nor how his eyes function ‘like a sharp spear’ (II, 300) that pierce and destroy the beauty and body of a mythical being. Apollonius’s ‘cold philosophy’ (II, 230) is as illogical as Lamia’s supernatural abilities:

Mark how, possess’d, his lashless eyelids stretch
 Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
 My sweet bride withers at their potency (II, 288-290).

At this moment in the poem, Endo notices how Keats undermines the polarity between romance and reason by creating a proximity between Apollonius and Lamia’s characters, highlighting how ‘[Apollonius’s] weapons are rational versions of the evil eye and the magic spell’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Sperry, ‘Comic Irony’, p. 305.

⁹⁷ In Act 2, Scene 2, 95-96, Polonius dogmatically claims that ‘brevity is the soul of wit / And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes’, even as the audience is encouraged to laugh at his excessive and virtuosic wordiness. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: MacMillan Publishers Ltd, 2008).

⁹⁸ Sitters, ‘Platonic Shades’, p. 205.

⁹⁹ ‘Sophist’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184755?redirectedFrom=sophist#eid>> [accessed 5/10/2015].

¹⁰⁰ Endo, ‘Seeing Romantically’, p. 121.

Apollonius's association with mythical serpent women is particularly evident in his fiercely bulging eyeballs that are medusa-like in their terrifying capacity to drain their victims of life and render them as helpless and motionless as a stone.¹⁰¹ Endo correctly identifies another collapsed opposition, between reason and romance, in which Keats again uses gender as a means by which to create interlocking binaries. Apollonius's mystical association with medusa also places him in the realm of the feminine, even as his spear-like eyes are consistent with the 'cruel, perçant, stinging' (II, 301) sexual domination of the male phallus;¹⁰² female bodily pleasure is converted into the sexually penetrative pain of the male. Yet, despite highlighting a characteristic complication in Keats's poem, Endo's conclusion that 'reason is just as magical as romance' goes beyond exposing a proximity between oppositions to conflating these two similar,¹⁰³ but distinct categories. According to Endo '[Apollonius] is an agent of disenchantment not without his own rationalistic magic'.¹⁰⁴ Yet, the rationalism and disenchantment Endo describes is not consistent with magic. Apollonius's abilities may be powerful, mysterious, and from unexplained origins, but they do not carry the same excitement and enigma as Lamia's magic in the way that Endo implies. Unlike Lamia's enchanting behaviour and complex physiology, Apollonius is predictable and singular in his unwavering desire 'to thaw, / And solve, and melt' (II, 161-162) ambiguities at whatever cost. Lamia's mesmerising beauty, both as a snake and a human, is simultaneously pleasurable to look at as well as a potential threat and source of suspicion in its ability to camouflage her multifarious character. But 'the bald-head philosopher' (II, 245) is straightforwardly ugly and demonic, using his abilities to destructive ends in a way that Lamia does not.

Just as Hamlet considers Polonius to be a dull and 'tedious old fool' (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 229), Apollonius is unlikable in his intent to wither beauty and spoil the pleasure of others:

[...] the stately music no more breathes;
 The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
 By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased
 A deadly silence step by step increased (II, 263-266).

¹⁰¹ Bruce Clarke also notices Apollonius's status as a basilisk, highlighting how Keats draws upon the myth of Apollo and the python. Bruce Clarke, 'Fabulous Monsters' in *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis* (New York: State University of New York, 1995), pp. 87-91.

¹⁰² See Endo, 'Seeing Romantically', p. 117.

¹⁰³ Endo, 'Seeing Romantically', p. 121.

¹⁰⁴ Endo, 'Seeing Romantically', p. 121.

The image of breathlessness, the sickness of the withering myrtle, and the reference to a silence which is ‘deadly’ (II, 266) suggests that Apollonius is not simply an agent of disenchantment, who exposes the illusions of Lamia’s magic, but also a fatal source of illness who actively brings misery to the lived experiences of those around him. Apollonius’s deadly stare not only ends the revelries of the wedding guests, but also has a sobering effect upon the reader. Keats shifts from the present tense in lines 263 to the past tense in the remaining lines of the quotation, pulling the reader outside of the narrative so that our incorporation in and enjoyment of the wedding banquet also ceases. The excessive use of rhyme, half-rhyme, and internal rhyme of the high frequency ‘ee’ sound within the words ‘breaths’, ‘wreaths’, ‘degrees’, ‘ceased’, and ‘increased’ is indicative of the sensory overload and nauseating sickness that comes after one has over-indulged in alcohol. Keats’s ‘inebriating art’ again demonstrates the pains caused by excessive pleasure,¹⁰⁵ by which Keats draws out the Apollonian characteristics of poetry and pestilence within Lycius’s mentor. As O’Neill argues: ‘Enthralment passing into disenchantment is not only an experience undergone by Lycius, but also, it seems, one shared by the reader and, indeed, poet’.¹⁰⁶ By indexing Lamia in ‘the dull catalogue of common things’ (II, 233) as a predatory serpent, Apollonius threatens to spoil the reader’s critical enjoyment of the poem by forcing an interpretation upon Lamia that we know to be too simplistic. Yet, it is the exposure of Lamia’s charms and magic that paradoxically sustains the mystery and ambiguities of the poem. The disenchantment O’Neill describes does not mean that Lamia’s mystery is conquered ‘by rule and line’ (II, 235) so that the reader’s attraction to Lamia’s enigmatic character remains unaltered. It is the naming and describing of Lamia that causes her to vanish ‘with a frightful scream’ (II, 306),¹⁰⁷ removing any possibility for the resolution of the poem’s complexities and contradictions. We have no knowledge of how the changes in Lamia’s physiology, from icy coldness, to the ‘pains / Of an unnatural heat’ (II, 253), intimate her name to Lycius. Nor do we understand how it is that Apollonius’s ‘juggling eyes’ (II, 277) can see into Lamia’s true identity where others cannot. Apollonius prevents the reader from discovering whether Lamia’s abilities would have been used to the pain or pleasure of those around her so that Keats’s teasing ambiguities and the painful pleasures of the reader’s curiosity remain intact even after the closing lines of the poem. By choosing ‘to cut rather than untie [the

¹⁰⁵ Boyiopoulos, “‘Enchanted Wine’”, p. 67.

¹⁰⁶ O’Neill, ‘*Lamia*: “Things Real – Things Semireal – and No Things’’, p. 129.

¹⁰⁷ Coleman O. Parsons argues that ‘To name [...] is to know’ and for Lamia ‘To name her is to describe her’. Yet, the announcement of Lamia’s name at this point in the poem does not aid our knowledge or understanding of her nature, but issues forth a mysterious and ‘deadly silence’. Coleman O. Parsons, ‘Primitive Sense in “*Lamia*”’, *Folklore*, 88 (1977), pp. 203-210 (p. 205).

gordian] knot' of Lamia's enigmatic nature,¹⁰⁸ Apollonius does not 'Unweave a rainbow' (II, 237), but pulls the threads of the poem's 'gloomier tapestries' (I, 53) even tighter.

Doubting Pleasure

It is the painful pleasures of uncertainty that characterises the reader's experience of interpreting and reading *Lamia*. As the reader progresses through each line of Keats's poem, its ambiguities thicken by confronting us with that which contradicts or complicates our emerging interpretations. For Apollonius, however, the knotty problem of Lamia's 'rainbow-sided' (I, 54) nature is 'just as he foresaw' (II, 162). Unlike the hermeneutical approach of Gadamer, Apollonius is not open to an encounter with the unknown and unfamiliar, but forces Lamia into the narrow limitations of his static, pre-existing horizons, leading to an interpretation which avoids genuine understanding by failing to account for all of Lamia's intricacies. Apollonius functions as a warning of who the reader could become if we fail to remain content with uncertainties. By reducing Iris's rainbow to the taxonomic logic of a Newtonian prism, Apollonius destroys its poetry,¹⁰⁹ concealing the messages the reader wishes to uncover; Lamia's beauty and the meanings the reader is attempting to discern vanish 'with a frightful scream' (II, 306), eluding us altogether. Keats anticipates and shares in Gadamer's belief that:

The fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away.¹¹⁰

It is the experience of truth that Keats's poetry emphasises. Truth is something that the reader experiences through language, but that Keats prevents us from rationalising, articulating, and containing within language; the labelling of Lamia as "'A Serpent!'" (II, 305) falls short of the reader's experience of this enigmatic character. In *Lamia*, pleasure becomes the means by which Keats stresses the importance of the experiential nature of truth. Lycius's sexual enjoyment of Lamia's 'new and exquisite' (I, 172) woman's body is founded upon the 'Caducean charm' (I, 133) of Hermes' 'serpent rod' (I, 89), just as the wedding guests' sensory pleasures are dependent upon the 'charm' (II, 124) of Lamia's 'glowing banquet-room' (II,

¹⁰⁸ O'Neill, '*Lamia*: "Things Real—Things Semireal—and No Things", p. 129.

¹⁰⁹ See Roe's depiction of 'The Immortal Dinner': Roe, 'The Year of *Endymion*, 1817', p. 201.

¹¹⁰ Gadamer, 'Introduction' in *Truth and Method*, pp. xxi-xxv (pp. xxii-xxiii).

121). But the illusory nature of Lamia's woman's form and the magic of her wedding banquet do not compromise the reality of Lycius and the wedding guest's sensory experiences at the time of their pleasures and festivities. The origins of pleasure do not negate the experience of pleasure itself. In the same way that alcohol artificially heightens the sensory system by affecting physiological changes upon the brain, pleasure is experienced with all the reality and corporeality of the feeling body in Keats's poetry. Pleasure is a frustrating site of contradiction in which truth and illusions are simultaneously manifest so that as Trilling argues: Keats 'may be thought of as the poet who made the boldest affirmation of the principle of pleasure and also as the poet who brought the principle of pleasure into the greatest and sincerest doubt'.¹¹¹ Pleasure may be an ambiguity experienced within 'a Life of sensations' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 185) during the process of reading, but it is also a site that prompts us to question and think through the nature of experience itself so that like Keats's depiction of the 'complex Mind [...] [we] exist partly on sensation partly on thought' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 186). It is the doubting of pleasure that makes the experience of reading *Lamia* 'bitter-sweet' (I, 59).

¹¹¹ Trilling, 'The Fate of Pleasure', p. 175. Trilling makes this claim during his investigation of Madeline's dream of sexual intimacy with Porphyro in *The Eve of St Agnes*. Trilling notices how felt reality can be mere illusion: 'erotic pleasure expressed in the fullest possible imagination of the luxurious, is the very essence of reality: it is all we know on earth and all we need to know' (pp. 173-174).

Chapter Five: ‘Pain had no Sting, and Pleasure’s Wreath no Flower’: Numbness as Painful Pleasure in Keats’s Spring Odes

For Keats, ‘pleasant pain’ becomes a means by which ‘branchèd thoughts’ are ‘new grown’ so that a life of thought manifests and propagates itself through a life of sensation (‘Ode to Psyche’, 52). Throughout both his medical and poetic careers, Keats devoted much creative and intellectual attention to the relationship between sensation, thought, and the imagination. As a poet who famously calls for ‘a Life of Sensation rather than of Thoughts!’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 185), even as he suggests that the mature and ‘complex Mind’ should ‘exist partly on Sensation partly on thought’ (*Letters: John Keats* I, 186), Keats’s contradictory attitude to bodily sensing has garnered considerable critical attention. Donald C. Goellnicht writes: ‘For Keats, poetic creativity is always rooted in material existence, in sensations perceived from concrete objects’.¹ Yet Keats is a poet equally concerned with ‘numbèd sense’ (‘In Drear-Nighted December’, 23), an experience that is not perceived from external or concrete objects, but is rather an inward and embodied feeling of vacancy. For Keats, numbness also stimulates poetic creativity, occupying a central position within his understanding of pleasure and pain. The 1819 spring odes become a key site of Keats’s investigations and speculations upon the nature of ‘Benumbed’ (‘Ode on Indolence’, 17) feeling. Helen Vendler argues that Keats’s odes may be thought of ‘as a series of controlled experiments in the suppression or permission of sense experience’.² Keats’s experimentation in these lyrics also reveals that the suppression of bodily sensing can give rise to such intense imagining that sensation is re-awakened. The odes not only demonstrate how ‘sensuous overload can lead to emptiness of feeling’,³ as Kostas Boyiopoulos writes. They also show how emptiness of feeling can likewise evoke luxurious sensing, such as when the Grecian urn silently pipes ‘Not to the sensual ear’ (‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, 13), but ‘to the spirit ditties of no tone’ (‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, 14). Keats questions what happens to bodily sensation when we imagine, envisage, and anticipate sensory experience, consistently making it ambiguous as to what sort of sensing is being enacted. The odes are his ultimate exploration of what relationship might exist between numbness and the feeling body.

¹ Donald C. Goellnicht, ‘Chemistry’ in *The Poet Physician Keats and Medical Science*, pp. 48- 83 (pp. 64-65).

² Helen Vendler, ‘Tuneless Numbers: The *Ode to Psyche*’ in *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 41-70 (p. 46).

³ Kostas Boyiopoulos, “‘Enchanted Wine’: Symons, Dowson and Keats’s Intoxications’ in *Decadent Romanticism: 1780-1914*, ed. by Kostas Boyiopoulos and Mark Sandy (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 59-74 (p. 73).

Numbness is an integral aspect in the confusion of sensation, an experience that cannot be dissociated from Keats's engagement with pain and pleasure. Jeremy Davies' investigation of bodily pain in Romantic literature argues that whereas embodied existence is usually in the background of consciousness, physical pain compels us 'to notice the body's very capacity for feeling'.⁴ For Keats, however, the absence of feeling similarly directs 'attention towards our sense of bodily sensing' as a vacancy that paradoxically demands to be a felt.⁵ 'Ode to Indolence', as Stacy McDowell has it, shows Keats as 'alert to the presence of absence – "the feel of not to feel it"' and it is this sensation that is frequently a part of Keats's economy of pleasure and pain in the odes.⁶ Keats's engagement with bodily pain is more complex than Davies allows, as a sensation that is not only repeatedly haunted by the pleasure it appears to counterpoint, but also as an experience that is intricately bound up with the more abstract internal life of thought and emotion. 'Drowsy numbness' is a physical condition that 'pains / [...] sense' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 1-2), even as it is engendered by the emotional response of 'being too happy' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 6) in the happiness of the other. Foregrounding the etymological link between numbness and indolence, Nicholas Roe writes that:

'Ode on Indolence', 'Ode on Melancholy', 'Ode to a Nightingale', and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' take different but related approaches to the meaning of poetry's 'diligent indolence' in a 'world of pains and troubles'.⁷

This chapter will extend Roe's claim to show how Keats's approach to numbness in these odes is as bound up with 'Joy's grape' as it is with 'sorrow's mysteries' ('Ode on Melancholy', 28 and 8). For Keats, numbness is not simply about the annihilation of felt experience: it is also a part of a complex dynamic of pleasure and pain. 'Ode on Indolence', 'Ode on Melancholy', 'Ode to a Nightingale', and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' explore how the painful negation of sense frequently contains pleasurable imaginative and intellectual possibility.

⁴ Jeremy Davies, 'Romanticism and the Sense of Pain' in *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature*, p. 21.

⁵ Davies, 'Introduction' in *Bodily Pain*, p. ix.

⁶ Stacey McDowell, 'Shiftiness in Keats's "Ode on Indolence"', *Romanticism* 23 (2017), pp. 27-37 (p. 30). For a fuller investigation of 'In Drear-Nighted December', see the introduction.

⁷ Nicholas Roe, 'Ever Indolent' in *John Keats*, p. 321.

Anaesthetics and Keats's Medical Knowledge

Keats's exploration of numbness in the odes frequently draws upon the images, ideas, and vocabulary of early nineteenth-century medicine. Surgical anaesthesia came of age in 1846 when the discovery that ether could be used as an effective form of pain relief was put into practice.⁸ Yet the search for anodynes and narcotics that could reliably and consistently alleviate human suffering had been a longstanding concern of medicine,⁹ culminating at the turn of the nineteenth century with the discovery of those gases and drugs that would become the basis of modern anaesthesia. Keats's medical education coincided with a period in which competing ideas around how to induce anaesthetic states were at the forefront of experimental science. Numbness became a concept that was associated with multiple sensations as an experience that could be brought about by several varying methods; procedures that Keats would have either witnessed, practiced, or been cognisant of during his time as an apprentice apothecary, medical student, and surgeon's dresser. Medical science in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was particularly concerned with the enigma of human consciousness. Scientists debated what the 'living principle' was and where it was contained, thinking through how animation and sensation occurred within the human frame. Most famously, John Abernathy and William Lawrence argued for conflicting views on what might be the source and cause of life. Whereas Lawrence's mechanistic approach to the vitality debate suggested that life was the product of anatomical organisation and physiological functions, Abernathy posited that it was the result of a superadded 'living principle' or 'vital fluid'.¹⁰ That animation and sensation might be located in a specific material substance that could be isolated, observed, and tested gave rise to the experimentations and speculations of physicians, chemists, anatomists, and dissectors. Following his electrophysiological experiments and his investigation of the electric eel, the *Gymnotus Electricus*, Luigi Galvani argued for the presence of animal electricity in the body by which he proposed a theory of electrical nerve transmission.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary* also sites 1846 as the year in which the word 'anaesthetic' was coined. While Keats was sensitive to the relationship between the aesthetic realm of art and the experience of numbness, he would have thought about this connection in the terms of 'insensibility' and 'numbness', rather than 'anaesthesia'.

'Anaesthesia' in *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6951?redirectedFrom=anaesthetic#eid>> [accessed 13/4/2018].

⁹ Whereas an anodyne is 'a medicine or drug which alleviates pain', a narcotic is 'A drug which when swallowed, inhaled, or injected into the system induces drowsiness, stupor, or insensibility, according to its strength and the amount taken'. See *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/8013?redirectedFrom=anodyne#eid>> [accessed 14/02/2018],

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125101?rsk=yZ99yR&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 14/02/2018].

¹⁰ For a fuller investigation of how Keats takes up the vitality debate in his poetry, see Denise Gigante, 'The Monster in the Rainbow: Keats and the Science of Life', *PMLA*, 117 (2002), pp. 433-448.

Keats comments upon the experiments of Galvani and John Hunter in his medical notebook,¹¹ explaining that Hunter ‘inferred that the Nerves were conductor[s] of electric fluid [...] The present opinion therefore is that a fluid, like that of the electric is secreted in ye brain which is thence communicated along the Nerves’ (*John Keats Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, 58). It was the exploration of how the nerves were organised and how they communicated with one another that enabled physicians, surgeons, and Romantic writers alike to envisage a world in which medicine might interrupt or block the neural pathways to those parts of the brain that facilitated consciousness and registered pain. Stephanie J. Snow explains that, ‘The possibility of suspending sensation without endangering life could not be imagined within the 1790s’ configurations of the nervous system: the associations and interdependence between sensibility and irritability were too complex to disentangle’.¹² But by 1811, Charles Bell’s careful anatomical dissections had shown how ‘the nerves of sense, the nerves of motion, and the vital nerves, are distinct’,¹³ thereby locating sensation and animation in different parts of the body. The significance of such a distinction was not lost on Keats, a poet preoccupied with how to control painful sensation and assuage ‘the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts’ (‘Sleep and Poetry’, 124-125). If animation and vitality were anatomically distinct from sensation, then it was possible that pain could be numbed without threatening those faculties that were necessary for sustaining life.

Keats imagines the possibilities and dangers of such an anaesthetic experience in the opening of *The Eve of St Agnes*. The first stanza explores how the cold effects sensibility and motor action by inducing an experience of numbness:

¹¹ For a fuller discussion of the science of John Hunter and its influence on Keats, see chapter 1 on *Isabella*. Like Abernathy and Galvani, Hunter proposed that blood contained a vital fluid by which the body was animated.

¹² Stephanie J. Snow, ‘Introduction’ in *Blessed Days of Anaesthesia: How anaesthetics changed the world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 14. For a fuller discussion on how Enlightenment science engaged with the complex associations between irritability and sensibility see: ‘Irritability and Sensibility: The Forces of Life’, *Medical History*, 28 (1984), pp. 47-65. This article discusses how the science of Albrecht Von Haller and Robert Whytt in the 1750s paved the way for the discovery of reflex action. Haller’s mechanist approach argued that sensibility was limited to the nerves and irritability to the muscular fibres. But Whytt established that: ‘The immediate cause of muscular contraction [...] appears evidently to be lodged in the brain and nerves’, eventually showing how involuntary movement could occur by means of the spinal cord and without the brain. Robert Whytt, *An Essay on the Vital and Other Involuntary Motions of Animals* (Edinburgh: Printed by Hamilton, Balfour, and Neill, 1751), p.9. Keats’s medical notebook similarly comments upon the involuntary movements of a frog after it has been guillotined, explaining that involuntary powers: ‘are supported [by] the nervous System and do not depend upon ye Brain’ (*John Keats Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, 56).

¹³ Charles Bell, ‘Reprint of the “Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain,” with Letters &c.’, *Journal of Anatomy and Physiology*, 3 (1868), pp. 147-182 (p. 154). Bell’s *Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain* was privately printed in 1811. Richardson explains how Astley Cooper was included on Bell’s distribution list so that it is likely that Keats would have had access to Bell’s neural discoveries through his anatomical and physiological lectures. Richardson, ‘Keats and the Glories of the Brain’, p. 117.

St Agnes's Eve — Ah, bitter chill it was!
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
 The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
 Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer old,
 Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith
 (*The Eve of St Agnes*, I, 1-9).

The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first entry for the adjective 'numb' defines it as: 'Deprived of physical sensation or of the power of movement, esp. through extreme cold'.¹⁴ Keats would have been aware that such exposure to low temperatures was one of the means by which movement could be restricted and pain lessened during surgical operations. Keith Sykes and John Bunker explain that from the seventeenth century: 'military surgeons noted that extreme cold diminished the pain of amputation on the battlefield',¹⁵ and Joanna Bourke also describes how physicians 'sought to blunt pain by freezing limbs'.¹⁶ In the opening stanza of *The Eve of St Agnes*, the 'bitter' numbness of extreme cold is presented as physically disabling to the hare, even as it is shown to be spiritually enabling to the Beadsman. Throughout Keats's lifetime, animals frequently became debilitated as a result of experiments with anaesthetics, a common method of investigating the analgesic and soporific qualities of gases and drugs. Henry Hill Hickman, for example, hypothesised that inhaling carbon dioxide gas could produce temporary insensibility, testing this theory by experimenting upon small mammals. Keats recasts such experimental medical traditions by making the hare the object of his poetic investigation of numbing. The hare's painful trembling and limited movement is depicted with vivid immediacy in line 3 in which the spondee in the second foot that emphasises the word 'limped', works to

¹⁴ 'Numb, adj.' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/129077?rskey=OZekdx&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 25/1/2018].

¹⁵ Keith Sykes and John Bunker, 'In the Beginning' from *Anaesthesia and the Practice of Medicine: Historical Perspectives* (London: The Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd., 2007), pp. 3-24 (p. 6).

¹⁶ Joanna Bourke, 'Pain Relief' in *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Pain Killers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 270-302 (p. 272). Victor Robinson explains that 'Refrigeration anesthesia was introduced by Marco Aurelio Severino of Naples in the middle of the seventeenth century', leading the seventeenth-century Danish physician Thomas Bartholinus to publish *The Medical Use of Snow*. Robinson, 'Early Developments' in *Victory Over Anesthesia*, pp. 3-40 (p. 40).

trip up the iambic metre and disrupt the steady movement of the line. Whereas the Beadsman's fingers are capable of movement without sensation or the threat of sickness and death, the limping hare is depicted as a victim of the 'bitter chill', with frozen limbs that restrict its movement and make it vulnerable to predation. As Robinson explains, attempts to bring about local anaesthesia often 'were as painful as the operation itself'.¹⁷ Yet it is also the bitter cold that numbs the Beadsman's fingers and enables his piety. The Beadsman not only remains conscious and alert while his physical sensations are diminished, but his thought is also heightened because of the dulled awareness of the feeling body. The Beadsman's physical acts of devotion, the telling of his rosary beads and the movement of his breath as he utters his prayers, are not inhibited by the cold, but remain focussed on the bettering of his soul and his personal salvation. The removal of sensory awareness redirects the Beadsman's attention towards the spiritual, concentrating his thought on that which is sacred. The cold is not a painful anaesthetic, but instead facilitates a numbing of the body and a frosting of the breath that is necessary for a 'flight to heaven'. Keats's attitude to numbing is ambivalent. While the opening stanza of *The Eve of St Agnes* imagines an environment in which sensation can be removed even as motor action continues, the description of the hare illustrates Keats's awareness that anaesthetics might also endanger life and bring about the very pain that they are designed to mitigate.

Keats was cognisant of anaesthesia's potential to relieve suffering and treat the symptoms of disease, as well as its ability to bring about sickness and death. From the age of 15, when he first began his apprenticeship as an apothecary under Thomas Hammond, Keats would have either witnessed, practiced, or been aware of multiple methods of pain relief. Such procedures were undertaken with varying degrees of success and many were risky and painful. For example: blood-letting or venesection was a technique regularly used to depress the system, bringing about a state of sedation that could lead to a loss of consciousness;¹⁸ administering alcohol was also commonplace as a narcotic and intoxicant that was able to fortify the patient before painful operations were undertaken; and nerve compression was a procedure performed by surgeons, who would apply pressure to the nerve or artery of a limb to induce numbness

¹⁷ Robinson, 'Early Developments', p. 46.

¹⁸ Snow describes how 'in 1813 James Wardrop bled a particularly nervous young woman until she lost consciousness in order to remove a tumour from her head. The procedure was successful — Wardrop taught medical students the technique — but most surgeons considered it dangerous'. Snow, 'Introduction' in *Blessed Days of Anaesthesia*, pp. 4-5.

before amputation.¹⁹ Plant extracts and botanical substances were the most common recourse to those in pain during the regency period. Gareth Evans explains that: ‘Approximately half of the [...] London *Pharmacopoeia* was still of botanic origin’ in the early nineteenth century and it is such organic substances that Keats repeatedly evokes in the odes.²⁰ ‘Hemlock’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 2), ‘dull opiates’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 3) extracted from the opium poppy, laudanum,²¹ henbane,²² and ‘Wolf’s-bane’ (‘Ode on Melancholy, 2), amongst many other natural substances, were all well-known medicines for pain-relief that acted on the brain and nervous system, and these remedies were also life-threatening in high doses. Roe notes: ‘Herbs and other plants had been cures and poisons since classical times, and Keats’s poems imagine the double nature of henbane, wolf’s bane and nightshade’.²³ As an apprentice apothecary, Keats was required to compose medicinal draughts, carefully weighing out substances from the materia medica in order to monitor the dosage of those remedies prescribed to his patients. Remaining attuned to the dangers of mixing such pain-relieving medicines incorrectly, Keats imagines how ‘drowsy numbness’ can quickly transform into ‘easeful Death’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 1 and 52) throughout the odes.

Keats’s engagement with numbness frequently refers to the botanical substances of the regency pharmacy. But it is the legacy of experimental chemistry in the early nineteenth century to which modern anaesthesia is most indebted and Keats also takes up such an experimental attitude to numbing in his poems. Joseph Priestley discovered nitrous oxide in 1772, but it was in Keats’s lifetime that Humphry Davy first recorded the anaesthetic potential of the gas. Keats would have been familiar with the effects of nitrous oxide not only because of Davy’s fame in the early nineteenth century as professor of chemistry at the Royal Institute, but also through attending William Allen’s lectures on ‘Experimental Philosophy’. Nicholas Roe notes how

¹⁹ For more on the technique of nerve compression in the eighteenth century, see Robinson, *Victory over Anesthesia*, p. 42.

²⁰ Gareth Evans, ‘Poison Wine — John Keats and the Botanic Pharmacy’, *Keats Shelley Review*, 16 (2002), pp. 31-55 (p. 39).

²¹ Laudanum is a tincture of opium dissolved in alcohol. Scholars such as Nicholas Roe and Alethea Hayter suggest it is likely that Keats used laudanum to treat a black eye he sustained during a cricket match in the early months of 1819, the period in which he was conceiving of and composing the odes (*Letters: John Keats II*, 78-79). Nicholas Roe, ‘Ever Indolent’ in *John Keats*, pp. 307-308. Alethea Hayter, ‘Keats’ in *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), pp. 306-328.

²² In the original manuscript of ‘Ode on Melancholy’, Keats initially wrote ‘henbane’ in line 2 before crossing it out and instead selecting the plant wolfs-bane. See Robert Gittings, *The Odes of Keats, and their Earliest Known Manuscripts* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 60. For more information on the implications of this cancellation, see De Almeida’s chapter on ‘Specific Pharmaka’ in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, pp. 163-174.

²³ Nicholas Roe, ‘Surgery, Science, and Suffering’ in *John Keats in Context*, ed. by Michael O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 29. For a fuller investigation of the status of medicine as both cure and poison, see the discussion of the pharmakon in the *Hyperion* chapter.

Allen ‘experimented with anaesthetic gases’,²⁴ and William Henry Welch also explains that, ‘in March, 1800, William Allen, the accomplished lecturer on chemistry at Guy’s Hospital, demonstrated, in the presence of Astley Cooper and others, the phenomena of inhalation of nitrous oxide, noting especially the loss of sensation to pain’.²⁵ Whether or not Keats witnessed or even experienced the inhalation of nitrous oxide during his studies at Guy’s Hospital, he would have been aware of its anaesthetic potential by means of his tutelage under Cooper. It was also in 1800 that Humphry Davy published *Researches Chemical and Philosophical Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide or Dephlogisticated Nitrous Air, and its Respiration*, carefully recording the therapeutic, recreational, and life-threatening effects of the gas in his experiments at the pneumatic institution in Bristol under the watch of Thomas Beddoes. Like Hickman, Davy initially tested nitrous oxide on animals. In *Researches*, Davy records the effects of introducing an injured dog into ‘a large jar of nitrous oxide’. He describes how the dog’s painful whining ‘immediately became quiet’, ‘in five minutes he appeared senseless, and in seven minutes was perfectly dead’.²⁶ Davy famously carried out such reckless experiments on himself, exploring how nitrous oxide produced different states of consciousness, and endangering his own life on several occasions.²⁷ Davy found that nitrous oxide was: effective in relieving toothache and headaches; capable of producing a reversible state of unconsciousness; and responsible for creating sensations of ‘thrilling’ and ‘sublime pleasure’.²⁸ It was the pleasurable effects of nitrous oxide that earned it the name ‘laughing gas’, attracting Romantic writers and thinkers, including Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge to indulge in what Maria Edgeworth described as the “‘rapturous sensations of the Nectar of the Gods!’”.²⁹ The relationship between pleasure and pain was crucial to Davy’s understanding of the gas. As Richard Holmes explains: ‘The gas was seen as blotting out the consciousness of pain with pleasure, rather than suspending consciousness itself’.³⁰ More significantly still, Davy noted that: ‘As nitrous oxide in its extensive operation appears capable of destroying

²⁴ Roe, ‘Surgery, Science, and Suffering’, p. 29. Hemlock was immortalised as both an anaesthetic and a fatal poison in the execution of Socrates, recorded by Plato in the *Phaedo*. Plato describes how hemlock produced a gradual feeling of numbness and then an inability to move starting from the legs and moving upwards towards the heart.

²⁵ William Henry Welch, ‘A Consideration of the Introduction of Surgical Anaesthesia’ in *Papers and Addresses*, Vol. 3 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1920).

²⁶ Humphry Davy, *Researches Chemical and Philosophical Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide or Dephlogisticated Nitrous Air, and its Respiration* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1800), pp. 337-347.

²⁷ In one experiment, Davy records how he ‘seemed sinking into annihilation’. Davy, *Researches*, p. 469.

²⁸ Davy, *Researches*, p. 462 and p. 550.

²⁹ Richard Holmes quoting Maria Edgeworth in ‘Davy on the Gas’, *The Age of Wonder* (London: Harper Press, 2008), pp. 235-304 (p. 264).

³⁰ Richard Holmes, ‘Davy on the Gas’, p. 282.

physical pain, it may probably be used with advantage during surgical operations'.³¹ While this observation remained largely overlooked by surgeons for the next 46 years, the early nineteenth century understood the anaesthetic sensation produced by laughing gas not straightforwardly as a complete absence of feeling, but an experience in which pleasure and pain were curiously interlinked.

'Ode on Indolence'

Like Davy's careful scientific observations, the 'Ode on Indolence' also presents a speaker who is attentive to how 'benumbed' ('Ode on Indolence', 17) sensation overlaps with suffering and pleasure. For Keats, insensibility moves beyond the medical as an absence that contains creative possibility. Etymologically linked to *indolentia*, a state of 'insensibility or indifference to pain',³² indolence is an experience that is alert to what it feels like when 'Pain has no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower' (18), or as McDowell puts it: 'The lingering sense of something which is not fully felt'.³³ In the same way that 'the feel of not to feel it' is represented as an affective experiencing of that which is absent in 'In Drear Nighted December', 'delicious diligent indolence' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 231) is in part characterised as an abundant and often sensuous lack; a gestating, fertile, and productive space in which 'the drowsy hour' is 'ripe' (15). Critics have frequently considered the personified figures of Love, Ambition, and Poesy in the ode as interruptions to the speaker's 'diligent indolence' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 231), creating an unproductive 'mental and physical torpor [...] in which no creativity can go forward'.³⁴ However the ode makes it uncertain as to whether these three figures are pleasurable manifestations of the visionary imagination and the products of an indolent and receptive mind — the state which the poem both calls for and desires — or if they are a painful distraction that encumbers the speaker's 'honeyed indolence' (37). Indolence is represented as a manifold and interlinking range of experiences that are unstable, interdependent, and shifting. Keats's ode illustrates the difficulties of achieving and sustaining 'delicious diligent indolence' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 231) and recognising the unpleasant intrusion of 'uneasy indolence' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 77), even as it shows how the latter is a state that ironically grows out of the former.

³¹ Davy, *Researches*, p. 554.

³² 'Indolence', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94696?redirectedFrom=indolence#eid>> [accessed 20/03/2018].

³³ McDowell, 'Shiftiness in Keats's "Ode on Indolence"', p. 30.

³⁴ Goellnicht, 'Pathology and Medicine' in *The Poet-Physician Keats and Medical Science*, p. 204.

Alongside the spring odes, Keats's February and March letters of 1818 and 1819 reveal how it is the end of winter and the forthcoming spring that turns Keats's mind towards the productivity of indolence, highlighting his sensitivity to seasonal change. Keats's attention was frequently directed towards the seasonal transition from the idleness of winter to the gestation and natural growth of spring. The February 19th 1818 letter to Reynolds famously characterises 'diligent indolence' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 231) as a condition of alert inertia. Keats writes that we should 'open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive — budding patiently under the eye of Apollo' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 232). Drawing upon Apollo's roles as god of the sun and of poetry, Keats uses the language of spring to argue that we should 'not go hurrying about' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 232) irritably reaching after thoughts, sensations, and mental impressions to be reconstructed into poetry.³⁵ Instead the letter proposes that the body should be idle and 'receptive' to the unbidden sensations of the sun and natural world so that the 'budding' of the creative mind is unforced and comes 'as naturally as the Leaves to a tree' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 238-239).³⁶ Keats expands upon these ideas in his long journal letter to George and Georgiana on the 17th March 1819. This letter differentiates between 'easy' and 'uneasy' indolence, characterising them as related experiences of 'laziness' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 77 and 79) that nevertheless share 'a great difference' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 77) in their relationship with creativity. 'Uneasy indolence' is described straightforwardly as an unbearable state of distracted and barren inactivity that is devoid of pleasure. Keats exemplifies this condition by recording his Sunday dinner with the Davenports, complaining of 'unpleasant human identities; [...] [that] press upon one just enough to prevent one getting into a lazy position; and not enough to interest or rouse one' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 77). 'Uneasy indolence' is understood as an unhealthy and even suffocating lethargy that shuts down the creative mind. On the other hand, 'easy indolence' is productively 'fill'd with speculations'

³⁵ Hyder Rollins argues that: 'No doubt Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" (as in "Expostulation and Reply") was in his [Keats's] mind' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 232), while writing this letter. Like Keats, Wordsworth's poem from the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* suggests that 'Our bodies feel, where'er they be, / Against or with our will' (19-20) and that 'we can feed this mind of ours / In a wise passiveness' (23-24). Critics have frequently aligned 'wise passiveness' and 'diligent indolence' with Keats's conception of negative capability. Goellnicht, for example, argues that Keats's poetry does not call upon the reader to 'receive and decode a message, but [...] to be active as well as passive'. He suggests that such open-minded passiveness is a fundamental part of negative capability. Donald C. Goellnicht, 'Keats on Reading: "Delicious Diligent Indolence"', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 88 (1989), pp. 190-210 (p. 194).

³⁶ It is also in February 1818 that Keats's writes to John Taylor: 'if Poetry comes not naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all'. As in his letter to Reynolds, Keats's letter to Taylor aligns poetic creativity with the sun, suggesting that: 'imagery should like the Sun come natural [...] — shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 238).

(*Letters: John Keats I, 77*),³⁷ an attitude in which one can even delight in those associations and imaginings that are of an ‘unpleasant colour’ (*Letters: John Keats I, 77*). Two days later on 19th March 1819, Keats would come to characterise such ‘easy indolence’ as an experience akin to numbness,³⁸ in which the ‘animal fibre’ of the material body is weakened ‘about three degrees on this side of faintness’ (*Letters: John Keats II, 78*). The letter anticipates line 18 from the ‘Ode on Indolence’ by suggesting that in this temper: ‘pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable frown’ (*Letters: John Keats II, 79*). Yet Keats also describes this feeling of *indolentia* as a ‘delightful sensation’ and a ‘happiness’ (*Letters: John Keats II, 78*). Keats’s letters show how the numbness of ‘easy indolence’ is paradoxically felt by the body as a pleasurable sensation, so much so that even painful impressions are welcomed as desirable experiences.

The March 19th 1819 letter goes on to describe how in an attitude of productive languor, ‘Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me: they seem rather like three figures on a greek vase’ (*Letters: John Keats II, 79*), thereby outlining the first stanza of the ‘Ode on Indolence’. Yet in the ode, these figures are ostensibly presented as ‘annoy[ances]’ (38) that disrupt the tasked aspect of the speaker’s indolence:

How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
 How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
 Was it a silent deep-disguisèd plot
 To steal away, and leave without a task
 My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
 The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
 Benumbed my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure’s wreath no flower:
 O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
 Unhaunted quite of all but — nothingness? (11-20).

³⁷ Donald Goellnicht similarly argues that ‘diligent indolence’ and ‘easy indolence’ are synonymous in Keats’s mind. Goellnicht, ‘Pathology and Medicine’, p. 204.

³⁸ Roe also argues that the state of indolence which Keats describes on 19th February 1819 is one of ‘easy indolence’ that ‘could herald renewed creativity’. Roe, ‘Ever Indolent’ in *John Keats*, p. 307.

The second stanza of the ode seems to present these three ‘Shadows’ as emptying out the speaker’s ‘idle days’, spoiling the budding potentialities of his ‘ripe’ idleness in the same way that Keats suggests of ‘uneasy indolence’. The speaker’s frustrated questioning seems to reveal a desire for a bodily experience of ‘Benumbed’ sensation that is ‘unhaunted’ and uninterrupted by those thoughts and perceptions that will cause him to burn and ache for wings (23-24), unsuccessfully seeking out knowledge and creative inspiration. And yet the ‘nothingness’ that the speaker calls for, and that he appears to have been enjoying prior to the intrusion of the three figures, is undermined in the stanza by the emphatic em dash that strikes across the page, cancelling out any impression of absolute sensory vacancy that the speaker initially proposes. As in Keats’s letters, the ‘easy indolence’ described in lines 15-20 is a pleasurable or ‘blissful’ condition even as the speaker is, paradoxically, simultaneously unaware of the presence of pleasure and pain. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* reminds us, indolence is as much about ‘indifference to pain’ as it is about the absence of pain.³⁹ Keats’s ode explores this nuance to show that while pain and pleasure are present in the speaker’s experience of ‘Benumbed’ feeling, such sensations are relegated to the background of the speaker’s consciousness so that they go unperceived, having ‘no sting’ and ‘no show of enticement’ (*Letters: John Keats II*, 79).

Yet Keats’s em dash does not simply suggest that ‘easy indolence’ is a condition of ‘nothingness’ in which sensory information is present, but goes blissfully unnoticed. As McDowell argues: ‘The extended dash is crucial, a pause for thought that stops just short of calling for total thoughtlessness. The line declines to choose between all or nothing, opting instead to remain suspended between modes of awareness’.⁴⁰ McDowell calls attention to the status of thought in the poem, as well as emphasising the ambiguities and fraught oppositions that dominate the ode, tensions that culminate around the noun ‘sense’ in line 19. Keats evokes two central definitions of the word ‘sense’ at this moment in the stanza, namely, that which is intelligible to the thinking mind, and bodily sensation.⁴¹ Keats not only leaves both interpretations of the word available, but also employs a double negative through the words ‘not’ and ‘unhaunted’, making the issue under investigation difficult to articulate. It is unclear

³⁹ ‘Indolence’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94696?redirectedFrom=indolence#eid>> [accessed 20/03/2018].

⁴⁰ McDowell, ‘Shiftiness in Keats’s “Ode on Indolence”’, p. 30.

⁴¹ While Keats is keenly aware of the correlations between ‘sense’, emotional feeling, and sensibility, this meaning of the word is not as strongly evoked at this moment in the stanza. For a fuller investigation of how the Romantics took up the word ‘sense’, see Jerome J. McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

if the speaker desires a condition of absolute nothingness in which thought and sensation are void; an indolence in which thought is almost, but not ‘quite’, unhaunted by the experiences of the body; or a mode of awareness wherein bodily sensation is almost, but not ‘quite’, undisturbed by the thinking mind. Keats’s double negatives do not so much insist on absence as reveal presence. ‘Nothingness’ becomes a haunting and a haunted presence in which the mind and body are both active. The em dash can be understood as ‘a pause for thought’ that spotlights the productivity of an indolence in which the mind and imagination are stimulated,⁴² even as it works as a frustrating moment of interruption that disturbs the trajectory of the speaker’s thoughts, obscuring the type of indolence that he is attempting to describe and that he wishes to return to. Keats makes it uncertain whether thought is an interruptive force to be resisted, or the desired end point of the speaker’s ‘gestating indolence’.⁴³ The ‘easy indolence’ that the speaker characterises as a ‘ripe’ and plentiful absence in lines 15-20 comes to bear a striking proximity to the disturbed indolence that he rejects in the first half of the stanza. Both hint at a ‘hauntedness’ that simultaneously points towards disruption and productivity.

It is from this ambiguous state of haunted ‘nothingness’ (20) that the three figures first emerge. Initially ‘strange’ (9) and unfamiliar, the continued presence of the ‘three Ghosts’ (51) appears to awaken a ‘thinking principle’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 281) in the speaker that disturbs his ‘summer-indolence’ (16). The thinking mind not only recognises the figures as Love, Ambition, and Poesy, but also registers and identifies complex physical and emotional sensations that eradicate his numbness. The ‘Shadows’ (11) function as temptresses that are ‘burned’ (23) after and ‘ached’ (24) for, even as they become painful ‘annoy[ances]’ (38) that the speaker wishes to be ‘sheltered’ (38) from. Susan Wolfson argues that the ode is ‘a tribute to “Indolence” contradicted by [the] busy thought’ of ‘common sense’ (4).⁴⁴ Whereas the ‘embroidered [...] dreams’ (42) of the imagination are celebrated in the ode, thought is seemingly rejected as an element of ‘uneasy indolence’. But thinking and imagining are presented as distinct as well as related mental activities in the odes. The workings of the ‘busy’ (40) mind and visionary imagination are a central element of the very indolence and ‘Benumbed’ (17) sense to which the speaker wishes to return. The ‘easy indolence’ described on 19th March 1819 foregrounds the lethargy that Keats would come to set out in the ‘Ode on

⁴² McDowell, ‘Shiftiness in Keats’s “Ode on Indolence”’, p. 30.

⁴³ Vendler, ‘Stirring Shades and Baffled Beams: The *Ode on Indolence*’ in *The Odes of John Keats*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Susan Wolfson, ‘Reforming the Sonnet and Forming the Odes of Spring 1819 Psyche; Nightingale; Grecian Urn; Melancholy; Indolence’ in *Reading John Keats*, p. 91.

Indolence' as: 'a rare instance of advantage in the body overpowering the Mind' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 79). Critics such as Goellnicht, Roe, and Alethea Hayter similarly align the physical symptoms of languor in the letter and ode, from the speaker's weak pulse to his numbed response to pain's sting and 'pleasure's wreath' (18), with the after-effects of laudanum on the body.⁴⁵ Yet if Keats did medicate himself with laudanum after sustaining a black eye during a cricket match (*Letters: John Keats II*, 78), as these critics have it, then the symptoms of indolence produced by this and recorded in the ode and letter are as much about the mind overpowering the body as 'the body overpowering the Mind' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 79). For contemporaries such as Coleridge and De Quincey, laudanum was an intoxicant that dulled the bodily senses, heightened the imagination, and opened the unconscious mind.⁴⁶ 'Ode on Indolence' similarly aligns creativity with 'the drowsy hour' (15), presenting the 'busy' (40) mind and visionary imagination as active components in the midst of dulled sensation:

My sleep had been embroidered with dim dreams;
 My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
 With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:
 The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
 Though in her lids hung the sweet tears of May (42-46).

As Vendler argues, the ode enacts a dynamic of 'recurrent return' with stanza 5 revisiting and reflecting upon the 'Benumbed' (17) sensations spelt out in the second stanza.⁴⁷ Here, the anaesthetic experience of 'summer-indolence' (16) advances from numbness and drowsiness to the unconscious realm of sleep. Keats evokes sensuous natural images of summer lawns, flowers, and sunbeams to suggest the fruitfulness and creative plenitude of his indolent dreaming, a notion directly pointed to in the depiction of 'embroidered' (42) sleep.⁴⁸ Indolence is recounted with such luxuriousness that the ode imperceptibly shifts from sensory metaphors

⁴⁵ Goellnicht, 'Pathology and Medicine' in *The Poet Physician Keats and Medical Science*, pp. 204-205. Roe, 'Ever Indolent', pp. 307-308. Hayter, 'Keats' in *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, pp. 306-328.

⁴⁶ Roe, 'Ever Indolent', p. 308. In the preface to 'Kubla Khan', Coleridge describes how the poem was written after taking an anodyne that caused a vision and poetic reverie.

⁴⁷ Vendler, 'Stirring Shades and Baffled Beams', p. 21. McDowell points out that critical uncertainty about how the ode's stanzas should be ordered, alongside the poem's complex publication and transcription history, has something to do with Keats's deliberate use of 'shiftiness' in the ode. For a wider discussion on the stanza order of 'Ode on Indolence', see: Robert Gittings, *The Odes of Keats, and their Earliest Known Manuscripts* (London: Heinemann, 1970); Toshihiko Sato, 'A Reevaluation of Keats's "Ode on Indolence" with Special Attention to its Stanzaic Order', *Philological Quarterly*, 68 (1989), pp. 195-213.

⁴⁸ See the etymology of 'text', a word derived from 'textere', meaning 'to weave'. For a discussion of the relationship between weaving/embroidering and poetic creativity, see the chapter on *Isabella*.

of internal impressions to a description of the speaker's external perceptions; inner and outer sensations oscillate and merge. The speaker becomes attentive to the subtleties of the morning weather, observing the exact appearance of rainclouds that are engorged with 'the sweet tears of May' (46), thereby undercutting any suggestion that he is unconscious and closed-off from bodily sensing. Sensory awareness is startlingly acute for a speaker who claims to have been indulging in indolence's blissful numbness and yet it is in this moment that Keats hints at the 'busy' (40) workings of the perceiving mind. The speaker's personification of the clouds transmutes the literal into the figurative, relegating the sensory element described in line 46 to the background of the speaker's consciousness. An outward looking gaze becomes inward looking so that the inactive but pregnant clouds of line 46 are aligned with the creative abundance of the speaker's passivity. Sense perception is overwhelmed by metaphorical echo.

The three figures are also born of the visionary imagination as illusory 'Shadows' (11) that are 'seen' (1) with the same inward eye that the speaker celebrates of 'honeyed indolence' (37). It is the speaker's inability to recognise the three figures that causes his questioning in stanza 2: 'How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?' (11). But just as Keats's March 19th 1819 letter describes the three figures as having 'no alertness of countenance' (*Letters: John Keats II*, 79), by stanza 6 the speaker learns to remain unmoved by those sensations and imaginings that might stimulate future creativity. Though the 'drowsy hour' (15) is 'Ripe' (15), Keats highlights the difficulties of knowing when to pluck creative fruit before it is spoilt by irritable reaching and 'the voice of busy common-sense' (40). The speaker's creative ripeness may be fit to burst like the clouds filled with 'the sweet tears of May' (46), but by the end of the ode he discovers that patience is necessary for 'budding [...] under the eye of Apollo' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 232), instead saving his creative energies so that 'no tears' (50) fall. The speaker learns to bid 'adieu' (51) to the 'Ghosts' (51), even as he asks them to remain present as 'masque-like figures on the dreamy urn' (56).

'Ode on a Grecian Urn'

In 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', Keats is preoccupied with the 'unheard' (11), eschewing a complete bodily experience of insensibility in favour of focussing on the suppression of individual senses. The questioning voice that torments the speaker in 'Ode on Indolence' remains vexed in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', but also becomes an exciting and animating energy. The retreat and return dynamic set up in 'Ode on Indolence' becomes a frustrating and enigmatic circularity in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', encapsulated in the rounded form of the urn itself. McDowell argues

that the 'Ode on Indolence' plays upon 'an anxiety to keep turning the imagined urn around to get a sense of the whole (even while doing so sees one side forever slipping out of view)'.⁴⁹ Whereas 'Ode on Indolence' focusses on the ephemerality of an imagined 'dreamy urn' (56), 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' looks more closely at how sensation, thought, and the imagination intersect when one is confronted with a physical art object, focussing on the creative and intellectual problems that arise when these three mental and bodily faculties come into contact. Just as the speaker and reader are always partially shut off from seeing and sensing the totality of the urn, the ode spotlights the limitations of human perception by showing how both the speaker and the reader can only ever focus on one mode of awareness at a time. The layering of physical and cognitive experiences that occurs in the act of interpreting both ode and urn produces a 'wild ecstasy' (10) that is pleasurably intense, even as an inability to remain simultaneously attentive to multiple forms of perception 'leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed' (29). It is an excess of sensory and perceptual experiences in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' that paradoxically produces insensibility.

In 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', numbness is as much about abundance as it is about lack. Keats's layering of different sensory experiences involves competing modes of awareness, each of which threaten to cancel the other out:

What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipe and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? (5-10)

The ode principally requires three intersecting levels of sensory participation from the reader, each of which involves a complex act of imaginative engagement with both the speaker and the figures depicted on the urn. Firstly, the reader must envisage what the speaker, as an observer of the urn, experiences physically, emotionally, and intellectually as they encounter the art object. Secondly, the reader is asked to imagine the sensations of the figures depicted on the urn itself as it is described by and filtered through the imagination of Keats's speaker.

⁴⁹ McDowell, 'Shiftiness in the Ode on Indolence', p. 28.

Finally, the reader experiences and responds to a bodily encounter with the sound and sight of Keats's ode as it is written on the page and spoken aloud. From the opening stanza, each of these perceptive layers come into contact with one another. It is unclear whether the reader is presented with a physical description of the urn's appearance, or if the speaker is describing his intellectual and imaginative response to 'Grecian grandeur' ('On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 12). Internal and external impressions intermingle as Keats creates a confusion of sounds and images that divide the reader's attention and make it unclear where our focus should be directed. The speaker's incessant questioning ostensibly provides momentary snapshots of images from the urn, creating a frenetic energy that directly counterpoints the depiction of the urn as a 'bride of quietness' (1) and a 'foster-child of silence' (2). The speaker's questions cut into the iambic pentameter, creating caesurae that increase the pace of the poem and emphasise a 'wild ecstasy' of noise and excitement that is mirrored in the image of 'pipe and timbrels'. Both urn and poem are anything but 'still' (1), instead shifting around so that we are given only fleeting glimpses of floral decoration, men, gods, and musicians. The reader is only able to focus on one image at a time even as we are conscious of a totality that is never fully captured. The frantic momentum of the poem seemingly emphasises the 'mad pursuit' of the 'maidens loth' so that the reader imagines and feels with the terrified virgins that are depicted on the urn. The reader's breathing becomes irregular and laboured as each caesura prompts us to take another breath, replicating the maiden's physical exertion as they 'struggle to escape' from the lustful 'men or gods'. Keats's masterful manipulation of poetic form forces the reader to enter into and share the sensory experiences of the artwork's fiction. And yet the repeated use of 'or' throughout lines 6-8 undermines such a bodily identification with the figures on the urn by presenting the reader with a series of alternatives to choose between. 'Or' forces an act of decision making by which the reader can only imagine one scenario at a time so that we are always haunted by those imaginative options that we choose not to pursue. Keats sets up a poetic model of cancellation that becomes the foundation of the reader's interpretive and imaginative 'struggle' throughout the ode.

Jonathan Mulrooney focusses on Keats's conception of the camelion poet to suggest that, 'What constitutes Keats's self [...] is his sense of movement from one perceptual regime – one body – to another'.⁵⁰ According to Mulrooney, the subject emerges from the movement and transition between bodies and modes of affective perception so that it is 'haunted by the life

⁵⁰ Jonathan Mulrooney, 'Keats's Avatar', *European Romantic Review*, 22 (2011), pp. 313-321 (p. 314).

not chosen, shaped always by an affective remainder that signals and indeed gestures longingly toward those uncaptured sensations'.⁵¹ Such an approach to Keatsian subjectivity can also be mapped on to how the reader experiences, responds to, and interprets the poem and art object in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. Keats spotlights how poetic and artistic interpretation continually requires the reader to jump between 'perceptual regimes', drawing attention to the reader's inability to inhabit multiple modes of awareness simultaneously so that we are always reminded of that which is 'uncaptured' and left outside of our interpretive gaze. The first stanza of the ode makes it difficult to understand the urn's physicality, obfuscating what images are depicted on its surface and thereby confusing who or what the reader is supposed to be identifying with. More importantly still, the repeated use of the words 'or' and 'what' draw attention back to the questioning voice of the speaker by demonstrating their inability to pinpoint exactly 'what' it is they are observing. Such indeterminacy highlights the fallibility and potential inaccuracy of the speaker's perceptions so that the reader is reminded that it is not straightforwardly the urn that is being described, but the urn as it is sensed by and filtered through the mind of Keats's speaker. The breathless, 'mad pursuit' (9) of Keats's poetry that supposedly enacts the sexual advances of the figures, becomes more about the speaker's restless desire to capture and fix down the urn itself. The reader is drawn outside of the urn's aesthetic realm and into the myth-making activities of the speaker who is not so much recording sensory data as constructing a 'leaf-fringed legend' (5) of their own making; cerebral activity is poised against bodily insensibility and that which is 'unheard' (11). Stuart Curran focusses on Keats's medical training, in which he would have encountered cases of coma and apparent death, to argue that 'Keats is interested in suspended animation not as a physical but as a mental state',⁵² wherein psychic restlessness is compatible with bodily insensibility. 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' pits a silent and motionless art object that is suspended in 'slow time' (2) against the imaginative and intellectual busyness of both the speaker and the reader. Unable to determine whether we should be responding to and focussing our attention on the urn itself or on the speaker's response to the artwork, the parameters of the reader's interpretive framework continually shift, drawing attention to that which is being occluded from our line of vision.

It is the reader's affective encounter with the sound and sight of Keats's poetry that both supports and undermines the ode's depiction of insensibility, illustrating how 'non-sensation',

⁵¹ Mulrooney, 'Keats's Avatar', p. 316.

⁵² Stuart Curran, "'The Feel of Not to Feel it': The Life of Non-Sensation in Keats' in *John Keats and the Medical Imagination*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 153-172 (p. 160).

as Curran has it, is a paradoxical and intense bodily experience that is bound up with ‘aching Pleasure’ (‘Ode on Melancholy’, 23). The tone of excess and abundance that is set up in the opening of the poem is destabilised in the second and third stanzas by the repeated use of negations such as ‘unheard’ (11), ‘not’ (13), ‘no’ (14), ‘never’ (17), ‘cannot’ (19), and ‘unwearied’ (23). And yet it is such absence that instigates thought and inspires the imagination for both the speaker and the reader, producing such vivid internal impressions that bodily sensation is pleurably stimulated. In ‘Ode on Indolence’, the speaker’s encounter with pleasure and pain goes unnoticed as the ‘embroidered [...] dreams’ (42) of ‘summer indolence’ (16) overwhelm what is felt by the body. The mind abstracts the speaker from his physical condition to produce a temporary state of insensibility. ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, however, shows how absence can produce an imagining so intense that sensation is reawakened in the midst of denied ‘bliss’ (19) and that which one ‘canst not’ (15) have:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 (11-14).

Separated from the auditory world, the urn is celebrated for its ability to ‘Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone’, whereby hearing becomes a curiously disembodied, psychic act. Keats apparently elevates the art object above the lyric realm of ‘Heard melodies’, proposing that there is more pleasure to be gained from imagining sound rather than hearing it first-hand. Yet Keats’s manipulation of rhyme in this stanza also demonstrates how poetry is similarly capable of stimulating the imagination and provoking thought through syllables of ‘no tone’. In lines 11-13, rhyme is not recognised with ‘the sensual ear’, but is instead noticed through the eye. Keats’s pairing of ‘unheard’ with ‘endeared’ and ‘on’ with ‘tone’ creates eye-rhyme through which the reader notices harmonies and correlations visually. The reader conceives of sound patterns mentally with the inner ear.

And yet, as Wolfson argues, at this moment in the poem: ‘the sight and sound of “endear’d” shades into “end ear’d,” as if to signify audience beyond the bourn of the “sensual ear”’.⁵³ It is

⁵³ Wolfson, ‘The Odes: Reader as Questioner’ in *The Questioning Presence*, p. 320.

the ‘sight and sound’ of Keats’s ode that paradoxically draws the reader’s attention away from a bodily encounter with poetic language and towards the speaker’s presentation of the urn’s silent workings on the imagination. The subtleties of Keats’s poetic language articulate an aural insensibility that it also threatens to counter:

And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and for ever young — (23-27).

The repeated references to ‘pipe[s]’ (10, 12, 14, 24) throughout the first three stanzas foreground acts of music-making that are continually denied and relegated to pictorial images on the urn. But the rapid breathing set up through the caesurae in the opening of the ode establishes a fascination with inhalation, exhalation, and the experience of ‘panting’ that continues throughout stanzas 2 and 3, foregrounding the physiological workings of the readers own windpipes; that part of the anatomy responsible for vocalisation. The alliteration of unvoiced fricatives, sibilants, and labial plosives throughout the third stanza in the words ‘happy’ (21, 23, 25,), ‘for ever’ (24, 26, and 27), ‘piping’ (24), ‘songs’ (24), ‘still’ (26), and ‘panting’ (27) emphasises the movement of the reader’s breath, as if we are being forced to enact the physiological processes undergone during vocalisation without producing audible ‘tone’ (14). Andrew Kay draws upon Keats’s medical education alongside his personal encounters with pulmonary tuberculosis to point out Keats’s ‘profoundly ambivalent attitude toward breathing: life’s constant wellspring, it was also the portal for death’.⁵⁴ Kay notes how, for Keats, breathing stood on a precarious boundary between the painful torments of death and the pleasures of life, spotlighting how the movement of breath in out-loud performance is ‘suffused with eroticism, twinned with sensuality’.⁵⁵ Yet Kay does not mention how inhalation intersects with Keats’s understanding of insensibility.

Experimentations with oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nitrous oxide had shown how inhaling gases could be therapeutic as well as potentially lethal. In 1823, Henry Hill Hickman

⁵⁴ Andrew Kay, ‘Conspiring with Keats: Toward a Poetics of Breathing’, *European Romantic Review*, 27 (2016), pp. 563-81 (p. 563).

⁵⁵ Kay, ‘Conspiring with Keats’, p. 564, p. 570.

demonstrated how a reversible state of insensibility could be brought about by the hazardous means of controlled asphyxiation. By introducing a larger quantity of carbon dioxide into the system, Hickman induced a pain-free ‘state of torpor’.⁵⁶ Earlier still, Davy’s *Researches* (1800) documented how such a torpid condition was bound up with painful pleasure, showing how ‘laughing gas’ was a dangerous substance whose dosage had to be carefully controlled,⁵⁷ as well as a pleasurable narcotic that created sensations of ecstasy. In ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, breathing is also a physiological act associated with the painful pleasures of insensibility by means of recording and enacting denied ‘bliss’ (19). The breathlessness created by the alliteration of the unvoiced ‘h’ consonant in the repeated adjective ‘happy’ is not only suggestive of the speaker’s physical excitement when placed in proximity to erotic scenes of lovers on the brink of fulfilling their sexual ‘goal’ (18). It also makes the reader physically pant as we read the poem aloud so that we too might undergo ‘the dizzy pain’ (‘On Seeing the Elgin Marbles’, 11) created when the body enters a torpid, oxygen-deprived state. As Geraldine Friedman deftly argues:

Structured as a double analogy, the text suggests that the erotic scenes *on* the urn figure the charged relationships both *between* the speaker and the urn, and *between* the reader and the text [...] in our frustrated attempts to understand an attractive but elusive poem, we, as readers, re-enact the speaker’s sexual urgency as he tries to penetrate the mysteries of the “still unravish’d bride of quietness”.⁵⁸

Like the ‘bold lover’ (17), whose ‘kiss’ (17) is continually promised but permanently postponed, both the speaker and the reader’s anticipation of critical certainty and imagining of the bodily encounters depicted on the urn’s surface, contains a ‘wild[er] ecstasy’ (10) than the experience itself, even as the denial of such experiences ‘leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed’ (29) and the body ‘burning’ (30) after what it cannot have. Exhausted and frustrated by our attempts to capture this ‘mysterious’ (32) and elusive poem, Keats’s ode seductively ‘tease[s] us out of thought’ (44), stimulating the thinking mind to such fever pitch that thought

⁵⁶ Snow, ‘Introduction’ in *Blessed Days of Anaesthesia*, p. 18. See also: John Symons, ‘The Quest for Hickman’, *Medical History*, 43 (1999), pp. 95-107; T. E. Keys, ‘Historical Vignettes: Henry Hill Hickman (1800-1830)’, *Anaesthesia and Analgesia*, 51 (1972), p. 349; Dudley Wilmot Buxton, ‘Those Who Worked in the Dawn of Anaesthesia. Henry Hill Hickman’, *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 3 (1926), pp. 165-173.

⁵⁷ For an investigation of the breathing apparatus Davy designed to control and measure how much gas was being inhaled, see Holmes, ‘Davy on the Gas’ in *The Age of Wonder*, pp. 235-304.

⁵⁸ Geraldine Friedman, ‘The Erotics of Interpretation in Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”’: Pursuing the Feminine’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 32 (1993), pp. 225-243 (pp. 225-226).

becomes confounded and withdraws from us. The reader's attention is refocussed on our physical response of 'burning' (30), wherein Keats foregrounds the embodied experience of out loud performance so as to dramatise how the body responds to interpretive uncertainty. The reader is left with a 'parching tongue' (30) from our breathless inability to arrive at any conclusive interpretive stance by which we might unite the many modes of awareness the ode presents. That which is denied is felt acutely upon the pulses.

It is in its concluding lines that the relationship between sensibility and cognition reaches its puzzling and enigmatic climax. The coming together of thought and sensation is the unachievable ideal suggested in the riddling conclusion of the ode's final lines:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know (49-50).⁵⁹

In her reading of these lines, Friedman argues that: 'the artifact pronounces an equation between the sensory category of the aesthetic (beauty) and the cognitive category of the intelligible (truth), an equation that allows meaning to be perfectly embodied in form'.⁶⁰ If Keats is creating an equation, as Friedman suggests, then such an argument can be extended. The ode also indicates that the 'sensory category' of form can be re-embodied by means of cognition. Keats proposes that insensibility and the silence of that which remains unanswered can regenerate into sensation through the act of thinking and imagining. And yet, such a pronouncement is an ideal that directly counterpoints the reader's encounter with the ode's epithet. The ambiguity of 'who speaks the last thirteen words, and to whom' means that the reader is unable to comprehend or envisage what form the pronouncement of the last line takes so that the 'truth' to be garnered remains oblique.⁶¹ Jack Stillinger focuses on the ode's publication history and textual uncertainty to show how it is unclear whether: the speaker is addressing the reader; the speaker is addressing the urn; the speaker is addressing the figures on the urn; or the urn is addressing the reader. Stillinger points out the difficulties that arise when multiple fictive and perceptive layers come into contact, arguing that 'no single

⁵⁹ For a fuller explanation of how these lines have been punctuated differently in various manuscripts and publications, see Jack Stillinger, 'Appendix III: Who Says What to Whom at the End of *Ode on a Grecian Urn*' in *The Hoodwinking of Madeline And Other Essays on Keats's Poems* (Urbana; London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 167-173.

⁶⁰ Friedman, 'The Erotics of Interpretation', p. 229.

⁶¹ Stillinger, 'Who Says What to Whom', p. 167.

explanation can satisfy the demands of text, grammar, dramatic consistency, and common sense'.⁶² Presented as an experiment on bodily perceptions, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' concludes by rendering the reader unable to know whether the last thirteen words are etched onto the artwork as a pictorial image, or if they are an epithet spoken aloud by the speaker. Such a tension struggles to be held in equipoise. The 'truth' (49) that the urn seems to express is undermined by the suggestion that the speaker may be proclaiming a fallible interpretation of the urn's significance, either to the reader or the urn itself; an interpretation that we know has escaped both the speaker and reader's grasp throughout the poem. 'Urn and aphorism together go round and round', writes Susan Wolfson, 'each serenely self-enclosed, endlessly circular, resonating with mysterious promise'.⁶³ The ode concludes by proposing an impossible act of decision-making between equally valid interpretations that endlessly cancel each other out so that, like the speaker, the reader remains pleurably frustrated by the 'uncertainties, mysteries, doubts' (*Letters: John Keats I*, 193) contained within this 'still unravished bride of quietness' (1). The seemingly axiomatic utterance pronounced by the urn at the conclusion of the poem at last gives way to the frustrated silence of unanswered questioning with which the ode began, dramatising the tormenting pleasures experienced within numbness.

'Ode to a Nightingale'

'Ode on a Grecian Urn' creates a dynamic of cancellation in which multiple perceptive layers work in tension, both pleurably promising and painfully denying the reader an awareness of the urn's totality. In 'Ode to a Nightingale', pleasure, pain, and numbness come into such close contact that Keats threatens to conflate the terms so that both the speaker and the reader are unable to differentiate between experiential modes. It is this coming together of different affective realms that informs Keats's wider poetic investigation of numbness in the ode. Numbness, by way of Bacchanalian intoxication and the poetic imagination, becomes a means through which the speaker attempts to 'Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget' (21) the pains and sickness of reality and enter into the world of the nightingale. And yet, the ode is also dogged by an anxiety that such ecstatic escape might represent an irresponsible retreat from 'the weariness, the fever, and the fret' (23). Abandoning the torments of actuality for the deceptions of 'faery lands forlorn' (70) equates to an 'easeful Death' (52) for the speaker, leading Vendler to argue that 'the fundamental choice, on which the ode turns, [is] between

⁶² Stillinger, 'Who Says What to Whom', p. 171.

⁶³ Wolfson, 'The Odes: Reader as Questioner', p. 327.

unhappy consciousness and the unconsciousness of death'.⁶⁴ But numbness promises to offer a third way in the ode, as a conscious experience of death's sensationlessness and a 'waking' (79) sleep that also threatens to become a fantasist's 'vision' (79). Numbness is precariously situated between painful engagement and pleasurable escape in 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

The ode begins with one of Keats's most puzzling depictions of numbness. The first stanza foregrounds 'drowsy numbness' (1) as a principle sensation through which the speaker encounters the nightingale, presenting it as a feeling that is inextricable from both the speaker's suffering and 'happiness' (6). Keats dramatises the workings of 'a mind actively sorting through ways to describe' the sensation of numbness,⁶⁵ enacting the speaker's own perplexity by making the reader uncertain about how the first stanza should be read in relation to the ode's 'melodious plot' (8):

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thine happiness —
 (1-6).

The first stanza announces the heartache of personal suffering, appearing to draw upon the language of sensibility so as to describe an internal life of passion and emotion. The speaker attempts to articulate a complex and intangible emotional response, denying 'envy' even as he implicitly evokes it in his experience of 'happiness' by firstly considering its presence and then acknowledging its rejection. Keats's similes, which are set up as an aid to understanding through the comparative gesture, undermine the initial implication that the speaker is depicting a straightforwardly internal experience by comparing the happiness which pains to the bodily experience of ingesting opiates and the narcotic medicine 'hemlock'.⁶⁶ Reading the stanza as a description of physiological sensation, David Olshansky argues that, "pains" complements

⁶⁴ Vendler, 'Wild Warblings from the Aeolian Lyre: The *Ode to a Nightingale*' in *The Odes of John Keats*, p. 88.

⁶⁵ Wolfson, 'The Odes: Reader as Questioner', p. 312.

⁶⁶ O'Neill also argues that if Keats's 'similes elaborate the original sensation (which refuses fully to define itself), they also draw away from it'. Michael O'Neill, "'The Reading of an Ever-Changing Tale": Keats (I) in *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, p. 189.

“numbness” because “numbness” becomes a form of unusual pain, such as an ache commonly felt when one’s leg falls asleep’.⁶⁷ Yet as Michael O’Neill indicates, ‘numbness and pain refuse either to support one another fully or be wholly distinct’,⁶⁸ highlighting how ‘my sense’ (2) is inclusive of both mind and feeling. The opening stanza ostensibly depicts an experience of pleasure so intense that it is experienced as an ache. It is a sensation that is felt with such acuteness that it moves beyond the limits of what can be felt at all. Incorporating both sides of anaesthetic experience, ‘drowsy numbness’ brings together the soporific sensation of a sleepiness that weakens consciousness with the analgesic component of painlessness. And yet what pains in the ode is ‘drowsy numbness’ itself. Keats counterpoints the suggestion of insensible sedation to articulate a feeling that refuses to occupy a stable or definable experiential category. Keats does not simply map out an experience that progresses from pleasure to pain to numbness, but blends these states by refusing to make them distinct. In O’Neill’s words, the lines ‘confuse categories as “drowsy numbness” lapses from and prepares for a heightening of consciousness’.⁶⁹ The speaker wavers on the brink of consciousness and unconsciousness, describing an on-going sensation that has not sent him to Lethe itself, but instead ‘Lethe-wards’ somewhere between awareness and oblivion. Despite claims of sinking, Keats uses the present tense to show a mind attentive to aching insensibility, even during its experience.

The speaker attempts to articulate and accurately capture his experience as well as identify its cause: ‘’Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, / But being too happy in thine happiness —’ (5-6). Painful numbness is the condition brought about by the speaker’s supposed alliance with the bird’s happiness. The preposition ‘in’ (6) foregrounds the speaker’s attempt to enter the world of the ‘light-wingèd’ (7) nightingale, which is later qualified by a longing to ‘fade away [with thee] into the forest dim’ (20). David Perkins writes that the speaker’s response to the bird ‘is sensuous and sympathetic in character, and the sheer intensity of it brings about a trance or semi-trance (the “drowsy numbness” of the “Ode to a Nightingale”)’.⁷⁰ Yet the indication that he is ‘too happy’ (6) in the happiness of the nightingale also highlights a gap between the experiences of the speaker and the bird, suggesting the excess of his response. Keats’s em dash

⁶⁷ David Olshansky, ‘A Comparative Analysis of Sensation and Reflection within John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”, *Keats-Shelley Review*, 17 (2003), pp. 27-33 (p. 29).

⁶⁸ O’Neill, “‘The Reading of an Ever-Changing Tale’”, p. 189.

⁶⁹ O’Neill, “‘The Reading of an Ever-Changing Tale’”, p. 189.

⁷⁰ David Perkins, ‘Keats The Uncertainties of Vision’ in *The Quest for Permanence The Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 229.

in line 6 fills the space left by unfinished utterance, supporting the image of a mode of ‘being’ that is ‘too’ (6) much or beyond the lived reality of the bird. As in ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, numbness in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is as much about ‘full-throated’ (10) profusion as it is about lack. The nightingale is not figured as a living and breathing animal, but a ‘light-wingèd dryad of the trees’ (7); it becomes a mythologised creature or spirit of the forest that is idealised within the mind of the speaker. Painful numbness is shown to be an experience brought about by the ‘numberless’ (9) imaginings of a speaker who is unable to achieve sympathetic identification. The ode sorts through ways in which the speaker might but crucially fails to identify with the bird, using numbness as a means by which to navigate through such experiences.

While numbness is partly framed as a symptom of failed sympathetic identification in the first stanza, the ode also explores insensibility as a means by which one might leave one’s own sensory realm and enter into the life of the other. ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ explores breathing and inhalation in relation to numbness. The second stanza of ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is likewise indebted to Keats’s medical imagination as it investigates alcohol as a pleasurable intoxicant that dulls the pain of ‘palsy’ (25) and allows one to ‘fade away’ (20) from the world of immediate sensory experiences:

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool’d a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim —
(11-20).

Exploring the role of Dionysian myth in Romantic poetry,⁷¹ Anya Taylor emphasises ‘Wine’s power to change, release, debase or exalt’,⁷² looking at the influence of Euripides’s *The Bacchae* to show the transformative nature of drunkenness. Keats is attuned to ‘the brief release wine offers to suffering mortals’,⁷³ not only drawing upon the mythology of ‘Bacchus and his pards’ (32), but also alcohol’s status as a painkiller in regency surgery and medicine. As early as 1814 in the short lyric ‘Fill for me a Brimming Bowl’, written during Keats’s medical studies, wine is characterised as a ‘draught’ (‘Fill for me a Brimming Bowl’, 7) of liquid medicine. Compared to ‘Lethe’s waves’, alcohol is figured as a substance that might be drugged for the purpose of forgetfulness so as to relieve the ‘despairing breast’ of ‘lewd desiring’ (‘Fill for me a Brimming Bowl’, 8, 9, and 6). Gareth Evans’s exploration of ‘poison wine’ in Keats’s poetry looks to the eighteenth-century botanical taxonomists William Cullen (1710-90) and John Brown (1735-88), who suggested that ‘disease was the result of disturbances in the nervous system and prescribed medicines that would either stimulate or sedate it’.⁷⁴ Alcohol was considered a stimulant that could fortify the body during the extreme pain of surgery, with Keats’s medical notebook stating that wine is a ‘stimulant [that] gives to the Body great additional Strengt[h]’ (*John Keats Note Book*, 9). That wine excites nervous energy, heightening the speaker’s sensory awareness is evident throughout the ode’s second stanza, which shows a mind and body luxuriating in each single sensation evoked by the ‘draught of vintage’ (11). Keats creates a feeling of thirst quenched, with a speaker who is sensitive to a ‘Cool’d’ (12) wine that counterpoints the intense warmth of ‘sunburnt mirth’ (14). Continuing to appeal to the senses of touch, taste, sight, and sound, Keats’s wine almost prickles the lips as its ‘beaded bubbles’ (17) fizz around the ‘brim’ (17) of the cup before staining the mouth purple. The speaker expands upon the floral taste and smell of vintage by describing it in the synaesthetic terms of the song and dance of Bacchanalian festivity. Keats allows such metaphors to move beyond the bodily, pointing to the activities of an imagination that envisages the ‘warm South’ (15) of the Mediterranean and evokes the mythology of the ‘blushful Hippocrene’ (16): the fountain of inspiration sacred to the muses.⁷⁵ While alcohol is repeatedly acknowledged as a stimulant in the poetry and medicine of the period, ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ also demonstrates Keats’s understanding of wine as a narcotic that dulls bodily

⁷¹ In the ode, Keats evokes Bacchus who was the Roman manifestation of the Greek god Dionysus.

⁷² Anya Taylor, ‘Dionysian Myths and Alcoholic Realities’ in *Bacchus in Romantic England Writers and Drink 1780-1830* (Basingstoke; London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 8.

⁷³ Anya Taylor, ‘“Joy’s Grape”: Keats, *Comus*, and *Paradise Lost IX*’ in *Bacchus in Romantic England*, p. 184.

⁷⁴ Gareth Evans, ‘Poison Wine — John Keats and the Botanic Pharmacy’, p. 36.

⁷⁵ See Barnard, ‘Notes for p. 346’ in *John Keats The Complete Poems*, p. 679.

awareness and liberates the imagination. As Robinson notes: ‘in all ages it was known that in the narcosis of drunkenness surgical operations could be performed without consciousness of pain’;⁷⁶ alcohol is precariously situated as both a stimulant and a sedative.

Wine occupies a liminal, almost trickster status, affecting and at times deceiving both the experiences of the mind and body. The ode draws upon Bacchus’s shifting roles as the god of wine, theatre, revelry, and ecstasy, as he becomes the unlikely figure through which Keats aligns sympathy with intoxication. At the turn of the nineteenth century, sympathy was conceptualised as an ability to leave behind one’s own experiences to enter into the life of another by means of the imagination, an idea that Keats repeatedly evokes in his poetry and letters. In his depiction of the ‘camelion poet’, for example, Keats posits Shakespeare as the key example of a theatrical imagination that ‘has no self’ and is able to abandon his own identity to take ‘as much delight conceiving an Iago as an Imogen’ (*Letters: John Keats I*, 387). Bacchus’s theatrical status is similarly implicit in Keats’s characterisation of wine in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’, in which the Bacchanalian ecstasy of imbibing is foregrounded. With etymological roots in the Greek *ekstasis*, meaning ‘to be beside yourself’,⁷⁷ ‘ecstasy’ (58) is figured as a sensuous pleasure that blots out the ‘weariness, the fever, and the fret’ (23) of one’s lived reality, enabling the speaker to ‘fade away’ (20) and transfer himself ‘into the forest dim’ (20) with the nightingale. In the same way an actor substitutes themselves into the place of a character by envisaging and acting out an alternative reality, the Bacchanalian ecstasy of drunkenness enacts a forgetfulness of one’s identity in order to liberate the mind and imagination beyond its usual modes of conduct. O’Neill proposes that, ‘Keats is able to throw himself into imaginings of escape, but these imaginings take on a force that counterpoints that escapist impulse’.⁷⁸ The sensory immediacy of Keats’s verse emphasises the luxurious materiality of ‘Cool’d’ (12), ‘blushful’ (16) vintage, making the reader ‘quite forget’ (21) that the second stanza is presented as an apostrophe and an elaboration on the object of the speaker’s desires. The reader is not straightforwardly confronted with a depiction of the speaker imbibing wine, but an imagining that is framed in the conditional tense. The speaker desires the corporeal

⁷⁶ Robinson, *Victory over Anesthesia*, p. 7. Robinson also explains how, ‘narcotic properties were early ascribed to hops. It was observed that the air of warehouses in which large quantities of hops were stored grew heavy-laden, and those who inhaled the air for any length of time were overcome by drowsiness and sleep. The hop-pillow became a popular sedative for restlessness and sleeplessness, and was prescribed for George III in his period of insanity’ (p. 13).

⁷⁷ ‘Ecstasy, n.’ in *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59423?rskey=isegsT&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 06/07/2018].

⁷⁸ O’Neill, “‘The Reading of an Ever-Changing Tale’”, p. 189.

pleasures of drinking as a means by which he might ‘fade away’ (20) from bodily awareness and imagine the life of the nightingale.

That the numbness of Bacchanalian ecstasy is presented as a momentary escape from suffering and a possible step towards sympathetic identification feeds into Keats’s conceptualisation of Apollonian sympathy and the poet as a ‘physician to all men’ (*Fall of Hyperion*, I, 190). Wine’s association with the ‘Hippocrene’ (16) in the second stanza aligns intoxication with poetic inspiration so that like Apollo, the God of poetry and medicine, the drinker’s creative imagination promises to reduce suffering and ‘pour out a balm upon the world’ (*Fall of Hyperion*, I, 201). And yet, the speaker’s rejection of ‘Bacchus and his pards’ (32) in favour of ‘the viewless wings of Poesy’ (33) underscores Keats’s troubled awareness that insensibility, by means of the sensuous delights of wine, threatens a disengagement with the ‘leaden-eyed despairs’ (28) of humanity:

Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs;
 (21-28).

For eighteenth-century thinkers such as Adam Smith and Edmund Burke, sympathy is predicated upon the notion that identifying with another’s pain can, in part, help to alleviate the sufferer’s personal grief. Smith writes that ‘by relating their misfortunes they [the sufferer] in some measure renew their grief. [...] They take pleasure, however, in all this, and, it is evident, are sensibly relieved by it’.⁷⁹ In the ode, the speaker’s indication that ‘vintage’ will help him to ‘forget’ the groans of men emphasises numbness as a potentially irresponsible and selfish retreat away from those who are in need of others that will ‘sit and hear’ (24) their troubles. Through his experimentation with the rhyme scheme of the ode stanza Keats

⁷⁹ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 18.

counteracts such potential irresponsibility, employing the ‘viewless wings of poesy’ (33) to make the reader attend to the painful groans of humanity’s suffering. Keats’s development of the ode stanza grew out of his dissatisfaction and subsequent innovations with the sonnet form.⁸⁰ Arguing that the Shakespearean sonnet was ‘too elegiac’ and rejecting the Petrarchan sonnet’s ‘pouncing rhymes’ (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 108), Keats’s construction of the stanza of ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ combines the alternating ABAB rhymes of the Shakespearean quatrain with the CDECDE rhymes of the Petrarchan sestet so that, as Jonathan Mulrooney writes:

More than a volta, or radical rhetorical turn, the transition between the stanza’s fourth and fifth lines suggests a transition to a wider space of imaginative play, even as it chastens the speaker’s desire for that space by remaining anchored syntactically to the quatrain.⁸¹

Keats’s movement between poetic modes in lines 24 and 25 enables the speaker’s initial identification of fretful ‘groan[ing]’ (24) to expand into a larger imagining of the human condition, even as such imaginative growth is rooted in the ‘elegiac’ feel of a quatrain that aptly deals with loss. The stanza catalogues with painful precision the grievances of humanity, wherein the anaphora, the unrelenting list of disease symptoms, and the emphatic spondees in the fourth and fifth feet of line 25 force both the speaker and reader to confront images of painful decay that directly counterpoints the pleasurable flights of imagination in the second stanza. The force of Keats’s depiction of suffering acts as a reminder that humanity will continue to ‘pine’ (30) even if the speaker were to ‘dissolve, and quite forget’ (21); relief from pain would be a luxury granted to the speaker alone. Like *The Fall of Hyperion*, which differentiates between the poet and the dreamer, ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is fraught with an anxiety that instead of pouring ‘out a balm upon the world’ (*Fall of Hyperion*, I, 201), the intoxicated speaker ‘vexes it’ (*Fall of Hyperion*, I, 202), numbing his own suffering while abandoning others to their woes. And yet rather than promoting the forgetfulness of insensibility, Keats’s formal experimentation in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ makes the reader

⁸⁰ In the letter to George and Georgiana Keats on 3rd May 1819, Keats transcribes the experimental sonnet ‘If by Dull Rhymes Our English Must be Chained’ as an example of his endeavour to ‘discover a new sonnet stanza’ (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 108). For a further discussion on Keats’s innovations in this sonnet see p. 23 of the ‘Introduction’.

⁸¹ Jonathan Mulrooney, ‘Keats’s “Dull Rhymes” and the Making of the Ode Stanza’, *Literature Compass*, 5 (2008), pp. 935-948 (p. 941).

address suffering by paradoxically enforcing a moment of silence: ‘Where but to think is to be full of sorrow / And leaden-eyed despairs’ (27-28). Keats foregrounds the eighth line of each stanza by truncating the metre from pentameter to trimeter, restraining the pace of the speaker’s imaginative trajectory at the same time as he creates a pregnant silence in the absence of a fourth and fifth foot. In line 28 of stanza 3, the silence at the end of Keats’s truncated line ironically makes the reader think about and countenance the unquestionable presence of suffering. “‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is self-listening’, writes Wolfson, ‘Phrases, words, and syllables repeat for new auditions, chiming with a difference, and for critical review’.⁸² In line 28, Keats’s unsettling silence not only forces the reader to think, but also to notice the subtle wordplay enacted by the C rhyme of the stanza. ‘Despairs’ chimes with and alters how the reader hears the word ‘hairs’, creating an auditory pun that strongly evokes the homophone ‘heirs’. Together, Keats’s manipulation of rhyme and metre forces the reader to listen to and reflect upon man’s ‘despairs’, positioning us as the inheritors of the ‘ills that flesh is heir to’ (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 278).⁸³ Poetic silence is an absence that makes the reader listen to and engage with the groans of men, implicating us in collective suffering rather than allowing us to ‘forget’ (21) it.

It is the ‘viewless wings of Poesy’ (33) that offer a possible alternative to irresponsible Bacchanalian insensibility. The visionary imagination promises a numbness that is paradoxically receptive to the sensory world and is seemingly engaged in the earthly smells of ‘soft incense’ (42) and the melodic sound of the nightingale’s ‘plaintive anthem’ (75). Keats oxymoronicly situates sensory sensitivity and sensual richness next to a void of visual data in the phrases ‘tender is the night’ (35), ‘embalmèd darkness’ (43), and ‘Darkling I listen’ (51), thereby ‘saturat[ing] darkness with the pleasure of possibility’.⁸⁴ The occlusion of sight heightens the speaker’s other senses and stimulates the imagination to ‘guess [at] each sweet’ (43), prompting him to listen so astutely that he is even able to hear the faint hum or ‘murmurous haunt of flies’ (50). Rather than being self-enclosed and divorced from the life of the other, the visionary imagination enters into the undergrowth of ‘the grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild’ (45), seeking to engage in the experiential realm of the nightingale. Such efforts to ‘fly to thee [the nightingale]’ (31) by attentively listening to the bird’s song does not

⁸² Wolfson, ‘Reforming the Sonnet and Forming the Odes’, p. 94.

⁸³ Keats deliberately misquotes this line from *Hamlet* III.i.63: ‘The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to’. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2008).

⁸⁴ Wolfson, ‘The Odes: Reader as Questioner’, p. 313.

necessarily represent a rejection of the ‘fever, and the fret’ (23), but an attempt to associate with the sufferings that humanity has undergone across different time periods, classes, and cultures; from those ‘ancient [...] emperor[s] and clown[s]’ (64) who have heard the nightingale’s ‘self-same song’ (65) to the homesick and ‘sad heart of Ruth’ (66).

David Perkins argues that ‘Keats’s overall approach to the visionary imagination is beset by doubts and hesitations’, questioning whether the speaker is ‘embracing a reality caught by the imagination, or an illusion projected from his own desires’.⁸⁵ The speaker becomes aware that the imagination that ‘guess[es] [at] each sweet’ (43) in the luxuriously scented darkness may not be seizing truth from amidst beauty, but grasping a ‘deceiving’ (74) fantasy that ‘cheat[s]’ (73) the senses. The nightingale sings with ‘an ecstasy’ (58) that seems to provide the speaker with his own *ekstasis*, projecting him into the ‘sad heart[s]’ (66) of past generations. However such a conclusion is undermined by the knowledge that it is the voice of the nightingale ‘that oft-times hath / Charmed magic casements, [...] / in faery lands forlorn’ (68-70). Like the ‘draught of vintage’ (11), ‘the viewless wings of Poesy’ (33) threaten to numb the speaker to the pains of others, representing an escape into a world of baseless illusion. Keats’s ‘faery lands’ remain ‘forlorn’ as a place of ‘abandonment’ that ‘cannot be found’ or have any bearing upon actuality.⁸⁶ Marguerite de Waal argues that the speaker of Keats’s 1817 sonnet ‘On Seeing the Elgin Marbles’ experiences a ‘disoriented drowsiness [that] restricts [...] [his] clarity of thought and imagination’;⁸⁷ a numbed paralysis that transforms imaginative transcendence into a barren dream. ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ takes up this idea, concluding by making it uncertain whether ‘drowsy numbness’ (1) has enacted a meaningful engagement or instigated an empty fantasy:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
[...]
Was it a vision or a waking dream?
Fled is that music — Do I wake or sleep?
(71-80).

⁸⁵ Perkins, ‘Keats The Uncertainties of Vision’, p. 220.

⁸⁶ See ‘forlorn, adj. n., *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/73413?redirectedFrom=forlorn#eid>> [accessed 26/06/2018].

⁸⁷ Marguerite de Waal, ‘The Poetry of Dream and the Threat of Barrenness in Three Sonnets by John Keats’, *English Academic Review*, 33 (2016), pp. 72-86 (p. 74).

The announcement of the word 'forlorn' (71) spotlights the potential abandonment of the 'sad' (66) and 'sick' (66), breaking the speaker's reverie and pulling him back to his corporeal experiences in the present moment. The nightingale is extracted from its abstracted setting within the speaker's imagination, returning to an embodied creature who flies across the physical landscape, 'Past the meadows, over the still stream, / Up the hill-side' (76-77). And yet the speaker's suggestion that he has been brought 'back from thee [the nightingale] to my sole self' (72) also proposes that who or what has been abandoned throughout the ode is the speaker's 'sole self' (72), indicating the possible achievement of the sympathetic imagination. Like the final lines of 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to a Nightingale' presents the reader with a riddling and circular conclusion that makes it impossible to differentiate between the insensibility of sleep and the sensuality of consciousness, the barren fantasies of dreaming and the transcendent truths of the visionary. Numbed wakefulness, which promises a state of self-abandonment and receptivity necessary for identifying with the other, slips over into the realm of the 'deceiving' (74) dream, even as poetic 'vision' is aligned with a sleeping and potentially idle mind that refuses 'to think [...] [and] be full of sorrow' (27). Insensibility is caught between the 'groan[s]' (24) of wakeful engagement and the fanciful and deceptive pleasures of disengagement.

'Ode on Melancholy'

In 'Ode to a Nightingale', the speaker calls for a temporary release from 'The weariness, the fever, and the fret' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 23) of actuality in order to indulge in the ecstasies of 'drowsy numbness' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 1). 'Ode on Melancholy', on the other hand, begins with emphatic rejection and tireless resistance to 'Lethe' ('Ode on Melancholy', 1), turning away from 'faery lands forlorn' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 70) and towards 'the wakeful anguish of the soul' ('Ode on Melancholy', 10). The passive and receptive *indolentia* of the 'Ode on Indolence' is replaced by an active search for and embrace of intense experiences in which the speaker suggests one might find Melancholy's 'sovrain shrine' (26). Vendler spotlights 'the questing activity of a newly strenuous hero, who refuses the opiates of drowsiness and indolence' in order to embrace painful consciousness with a relish that is equivalent to luxuriating in delight.⁸⁸ And yet throughout the ode, numbness is also situated as a part of such intense experiences. Insensibility is not only felt upon the pulses with the same vitality as pain and pleasure, but is also situated at the end point of extreme sensation.

⁸⁸ Vendler, 'The Strenuous Tongue: The *Ode on Melancholy*' in *The Odes of John Keats*, p. 157.

Numbness to affective pleasure and suffering might be brought about by the very sensation it appears to eradicate, wherein pain and delight are experienced with such force that they move beyond the limits of what can be felt by the human body. ‘Ode on Melancholy’ spotlights Keats’s simultaneous reversion and attraction to the life of ‘non-sensation’;⁸⁹ numbness is at once desired and longed for, as well as a potentially dangerous condition to be rejected.

The first stanza’s vehement denial of ‘Lethe’ (1) is ironically established through the repeated negative ‘No’ (1), opening the ode on a jolting spondaic interjection that creates the impression that the reader is entering this lyric in mid utterance.⁹⁰ The first stanza makes it ambiguous as to whom the speaker addresses so that it is unclear whether the reader is included in the speaker’s directives or if they are positioned as outsiders overhearing the speaker’s private contemplations. The second person pronouns involve the reader by instructing them how not to search for melancholy, even as the stanza’s passionate and unrelenting denial of botanical narcotics implies a deeply personal struggle against the seductions of ‘Lethe’ (1). Hamlet-like, the speaker appears to convince himself against a suicidal drive towards ‘drowsy numbness’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 1). As Vendler notes, Keats draws upon and subverts the language and imagery of renaissance medicine and literature, arguing that: ‘the poet addresses admonitions to himself, borrowing the mode of Hamlet’s self-lacerating soliloquies, crossed with the mode of advice-to-the-perplexed that Keats found in Burton’.⁹¹ Although attuned to advancements in the regency pharmacopoeia, Keats’s approach to insensibility is also indebted to renaissance medicine which considered the melancholy humour as a creative stimulant as well as a disease to be cured. In ‘Cure of Love-Melancholy’ from the third partition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which we know Keats and Charles Brown were reading and discussing in 1819,⁹² Robert Burton suggests that the melancholic patient should not be prescribed ‘Narcoticks, Cordials, Nectarines, Potions’, but should firstly receive ‘good counsel and advice [...] of great

⁸⁹ Curran, ‘The Life of Non-Sensation in Keats’, pp. 153-172.

⁹⁰ That Keats cancelled the original opening ‘phantom gibbet’ stanza suggests that there was a deliberate effort to make the ode feel as if it were beginning in the middle of a thought.

⁹¹ Vendler, ‘The Strenuous Tongue’, p. 158.

⁹² Keats’s surviving copy of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which was owned and then re-gifted to him by Brown, contains Keats’s underscores and marginalia throughout the section on ‘Love Melancholy’ so that we know he considered this section of Burton in much detail. While these annotations show Burton’s influence on Keats, it is unclear exactly when Keats acquired and read *The Anatomy*. Robert Gittings suggests it was Winter 1818, whereas Aileen Ward believes it was June 1819, after the odes were written. Despite this ambiguity, Keats would have been aware of the playfully instructive nature of *The Anatomy* and may have read Brown’s edition before it was gifted to him. Keats would have certainly known and been fascinated by the fact that Burton brings together medicine and literature. Aileen Ward, ‘Keats and Burton: A Reappraisal’, *Philological Quarterly*, 40 (1961), pp. 535-552. Robert Gittings, *John Keats: The Living Year* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

force' from a wise 'man of authority'.⁹³ Keats likewise rejects narcotics, but also upends this medical advice, instructing either himself or the reader how not to get to melancholy in stanza 1 before showing them how to seek 'Veiled Melancholy' (26) in the rest of the ode. Melancholy and numbness are presented as multifaceted experiences in the ode, some of which are welcomed and others of which are bid 'adieu' (23):

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine:
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
 [...]
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul
 ('Ode on Melancholy', 1-10).

Despite the speaker's vehement rejection of 'Wolf's-bane' (2), 'nightshade' (4), and 'yew-berries' (5),⁹⁴ Keats's frenzied rhythms and jarring caesurae highlight the pained efforts of a speaker who must use all his exertion to avoid the temptations of such drugs. The speaker initially positions insensibility as a dangerous and unwanted condition, a 'poisonous wine' (2) that transforms the Nightingale's 'draught of vintage' ('Ode to a Nightingale, 11) from a substance of pleasurable escape to a toxic venom that threatens fatal extinction. While 'to think is to be full of sorrow' ('Ode to a Nightingale, 27), such 'wakeful anguish' (10) is preferable to the annihilation of all consciousness, which might leave one in a barren and senseless state that is devoid of any mental activity. The ode proposes that melancholy might be nurtured by actively embracing painful consciousness, or by glutting sorrow (15), or by feeding upon your mistress's 'rich anger' (18). And yet, in the ode, numbness is implicitly acknowledged as a symptom of these intense experiences, as well as a locus of creativity. While the opening stanza is aware of the potentially lethal side-effects that come with incorrectly mixing and preparing medicinal draughts, Keats elaborates upon this process with such intricate attention to detail that he suggests the speaker is savouring the experience. The fatal nerve-poison 'nightshade'

⁹³ Robert Burton, "'Cure of Love-Melancholy" Part. III, Sect. II, Mem. V, Subs. III' in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. III, ed. by the Rev. A. R. Shilleto (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), pp. 235-236.

⁹⁴ For a fuller account of the specific effects of these poisons, see: de Almeida, 'Specific Pharmaka' in *Romantic Medicine and John Keats*, pp. 163-174.

(4) is mythologised and anthropomorphised, transformed into an attractive lover who kisses with all the seduction of a femme fatale. Keats appeals to the sensual and erotic capabilities of the lips through an implicit reference to taste in the image of the ‘ruby grape of Proserpine’ (4). By evoking the daughter of Ceres, the Roman goddess of fertility and agriculture, Keats belies the unproductive and barren insensibility of narcotic drugs to show how the poison fruit of numbness might contain something gestative. Numbness is not necessarily a state that renders the thinking mind insensible. In the same way that the ‘melancholy fit’ (11) is compared to ‘a weeping cloud, / That fosters the droop-headed flowers’ (12-13), numbness contains creative possibility even as it is pathologically figured as a poison.

The intense experience of ‘aching Pleasure’ (23) saturates the language and imagery of the ode’s concluding stanza, ostensibly removing any suggestion of Lethe’s numbness. Keats’s fascination with ‘taste’ (29) continues in the sensual descriptions of ‘the bee-mouth’ (24) that sips and the ‘strenuous tongue / [that] Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine’ (27-28). Deadly narcotics and soporifics are rejected in the opening stanza. And yet their presence recurs again in the image of a pleasure that turns to ‘poison’ (24) at the very moment of its ingestion. Despite Keats’s sensually rich language, such evocative depictions are simultaneously denied their immediacy. Keats presents ‘Beauty’ (21), ‘Joy’ (21), and ‘aching Pleasure’ (23) either as sensations that ‘must die’ (21) and who are ‘bidding adieu’ (23) in the midst of ending, or as experiences that are ‘nigh’ (23) and have not yet occurred. Melancholy is positioned on the peripheries of intense experience, when sensations are either departing or yet to arrive:

Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.
 (25-30).

Keats locates Melancholy in Delight even as he suggests that in order to arrive at and view its ‘temple’ (25) one must force ‘Joy’ (28) to its conclusion. Situated at the terminus of extreme sensation, numbness becomes a part of the corporeal experiences Keats’s ‘strenuous hero’ seeks out. As Robert Cummings crucially observes: ‘The peculiar melancholy edge of intense

experience is its unaccommodatability, its being on the edge of what can be felt at all. [...] desire is painful, and our arrival at the limits of pleasure includes that pain'.⁹⁵ The speaker wishes to reach the intense limits of pleasure, even as he recognises the sorrow that comes with knowing that no further joy can be felt. The 'aching Pleasure' (23) of desire dwells within a numbness that occurs at the threshold of intense experience. Melancholy resides with the painful pleasure of a longing that can never be satisfied. After avoiding the dangers of 'Lethe' (1) and actively seeking out the pleasures of intense experience, it is at the culmination of delight that Keats's speaker is inertly 'hung', still yearning after 'pleasure's wreath' ('Ode on Indolence', 18). 'Ode on Melancholy' concludes with the same ambivalence with which it began, wherein the speaker returns to a condition that at once signals a death of thoughtless oblivion, as well as a state of 'suspended animation' and receptive *indolentia*.⁹⁶ Just as pleasure, pain, and insensibility repeatedly circle in on each other, 'drowsy numbness' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 1) recurs at the conclusion of Keats's ode.

The Odes' 'Tuneless Numbers'

It is this self-enclosing and self-referential dynamic that characterises the 1819 spring odes. As critics such as Vendler and Gittings have proposed, each of Keats's poems alludes to and comments upon another to form an 'ode-sequence on the same themes'.⁹⁷ 'Ode to Psyche' exemplifies such an approach, taking up and incorporating the other odes' central preoccupation with the 'aching Pleasure' ('Ode on Melancholy', 23) of numbness.⁹⁸ The benumbed, 'easy indolence' that was interrupted by the 'voice of busy common sense' ('Ode on Indolence', 40) in 'Ode on Indolence', becomes 'sheltered from annoy' ('Ode on Indolence', 38) in the 'Ode to Psyche'. While inactive, the speaker inwardly produces a song to Psyche that is not articulated or disclosed within the sensory world of fame, ambition, and poetry. 'Shadowy thought' ('Ode to Psyche', 66) remains receptive; an 'open casement [...] / [To] Let in the budding warmth' ('Ode on Indolence', 47-48), or as the 'Ode to Psyche' has it:

⁹⁵ Robert Cummings, 'Keats's Melancholy in the Temple of Delight', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 36 (1987), pp. 50-62 (p. 51). Steven Bruhm also explains how, 'pain [...] threatens to destroy our awareness of it. Intense pain often becomes numbness (as in the shock which follows a serious wound)'. Steven Bruhm, 'Aesthetics and Anesthetics at the Revolution', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32 (1993), pp. 399-424 (p. 403).

⁹⁶ See Curran, who also points this out: 'Although the poet of the "Ode on Melancholy" at the onset eschews the agency of opiates, in the end he will find himself in Melancholy's "sovrain shrine" (26), "hung", figuratively suspended, "among her cloudy trophies" (30)'. Curran, 'The Life of Non-Sensation', p. 165.

⁹⁷ Gittings, 'How the Odes were Written April to September 1918' in *The Odes of John Keats and Their Earliest Known Manuscripts*, p. 15.

⁹⁸ Curran notes how 'Suspended animation resonates like a theme and set of variations' across the odes. Curran, 'The Life of Non-Sensation', p. 164.

‘a casement ope at night, / To let the warm Love in!’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 66-67). Like the unheard melodies of the Grecian urn, ‘Ode to Psyche’ demands the reader to hear ‘tuneless numbers’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 1) that are not piped to ‘the sensual ear’ (‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ 13), but conceived of in ‘the wreathed trellis of a working brain’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 60). Melancholy’s ‘sovrán shrine’ might be found by the questing hero’s ability to immerse himself in ‘aching pleasure’ (‘Ode on Melancholy, 26 and 23). But it is within ‘some untrodden region of [the] mind / Where branchèd thoughts are new grown with pleasant pain’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 51-52) that the speaker of ‘Ode to Psyche’ conceives of an altar at which to pay homage to the ‘latest born’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 24) and unworshipped Olympian. ‘[R]ecollect[ing] that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess [...] [until] after [sic] the Agustan [sic] age’ (*Letters: John Keats* II, 106), Keats evokes rich sensory experiences by means of referring to that which has not been felt by the body, anaphorically cataloguing what the Goddess Psyche has not encountered: ‘Nor altar heaped with flowers; / Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan (‘Ode to Psyche’, 30-31). Throughout each ode, the condition of non-sensation includes creative possibilities, whereby the mind imagines sensation with such acuteness that the body anticipates the experience. Insensibility contains ‘Tuneless numbers’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 1) or ‘Shadows numberless’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 9), encompassing countless echoes of the sensations they appear to eradicate. As Wolfson argues, the final ‘consummation in Keats’s ode [to Psyche] — between Psyche and Love — remains a shadowy anticipation’.⁹⁹ Just as the ‘Bold love, never, never canst [...] kiss’ (‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, 17), Psyche and Cupid remain suspended in a liminal state between kissing and not kissing, wherein pleasure is permanently and painfully delayed, but continually promised and exquisitely longed for: ‘Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 17).

And yet in the ‘Ode to Psyche’, Keats’s fascination with benumbed dream states begins to be redirected towards his epic ambitions, which would come to be fully realised in his next poetic project: *The Fall of Hyperion*.¹⁰⁰ Like ‘Ode to Psyche’, *The Fall of Hyperion* is set within a dreamscape in which the speaker is confronted with Titan and Olympian Gods. Dogged by a concern that he is ‘too late for antique vows’ (‘Ode to Psyche’, 36), Keats presents a speaker who arrives late to a half-consumed feast only to be plunged into ‘drowsy numbness’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 1) by a ‘transparent juice’ (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 42-43). Beginning with the

⁹⁹ Wolfson, ‘The Odes; Reader as Questioner’, p. 309.

¹⁰⁰ Vendler also draws a continuum between the odes and *The Fall of Hyperion* in Keats’s poetic trajectory. Vendler, ‘The Dark Secret Chambers: *The Fall of Hyperion*’ in *The Odes of John Keats*, pp. 191-226.

questing hero of 'Ode on Melancholy' and fostered within the belated speaker of 'Ode to Psyche', Keats's lyric exploration of insensibility would continue into his experiments with lyric-epic hybridisation. For Keats, insensibility remained a negation to be explored and speculated upon; an embodied absence that contained dangerous potential to either stimulate or suppress thought. In the odes, numbness becomes a way for Keats to navigate through some of his deepest poetic concerns, from the relationship between thought and sensation, the difficulties of sympathetic identification, the proximity of 'vision[s]' and 'waking dream[s]' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 79), and the relationship between pain's sting and 'pleasure's wreath' ('Ode on Indolence', 18). Together, the odes demonstrate how Keats is attuned to the diverse range of affective and cognitive experiences that are enmeshed in the condition of 'drowsy numbness' ('Ode to a Nightingale', 1).

Conclusion: Keats's 'Voyage of Conception'

'Half-Reaped Furrow[s]'

It is the careful balancing between pleasure and pain, the delicate 'feeling for light and shade' (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 360), and the cautious playing of foul against fair that enlivens and complicates Keats's most celebrated works. Nowhere is this more the case than in Keats's ode 'To Autumn', a poem that 'identifies balance and equity as particularly appropriate' to this season.¹ Unlike the 1819 spring odes, 'To Autumn' seems to abandon the negations of 'unheard' melodies ('Ode on a Grecian Urn', 11) and Lethe's 'nothingness' ('Ode on Indolence', 20) in favour of Autumn's 'music' ('To Autumn', 24) and the rich abundance of the harvest. In this poem of 'immense suggestiveness',² Keats aligns the natural environment with poetic creation: 'A teeming brain becomes a ripe field; the act of writing the reaping of that field'.³ 'To Autumn' reflects upon the Apollonian sun as a subtle presence that nurtures both the poet and reader towards a 'ripeness of intellect' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 231), exploring how the poet garners the fruits of his creative imagination, as well as how the poem affords inexhaustible opportunities for the reader to reap a 'sweet kernel' ('To Autumn', 8) that might bloom into their own 'voyage of conception' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 231). Often considered as the apotheosis of Keats's poetic development, 'To Autumn' describes the natural world achieving its own maturity and 'ripeness' by detailing the plenitude of 'plump [...] hazel shells', 'budding' flowers, and the 'o'er-brimmed [...] clammy cells' of honeyed beehives ('To Autumn', 6, 7, 8, and 11). But within these images of gorgeous exuberance and luxurious growth, Keats admits the presence of absence, acknowledging the participation of loss and grief within Autumn's bounty. The speaker's imagination is stimulated by the barrenness of empty 'stubble-plains' (26) from which he imagines Autumn's 'fruitfulness' (1),⁴ envisaging the

¹ Nicholas Roe, 'Epilogue: John Keats's Commonwealth: The 1820 Collection and "To Autumn"' in *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) pp. 230-267 (p. 262). Amongst other critics, Roe has read 'To Autumn' in the context of the political and social events of 1819, focussing particular attention on the Peterloo massacre which occurred only a month before Keats wrote this ode. Roe points out how Ceres is the Goddess of fruitfulness and the harvest, as well as a figure associated with agrarian labour, law, justice, and the demarcation of land boundaries, noting how the 'reformists' banners at St Peter's Fields had been emblazoned with the figure of Justice holding her scales' (p. 260). Bennett also draws out Keats's 'conspiring' ('To Autumn', 3) in the ode to argue for the 'implicit political "subtext" of the poem'. Bennett, 'To Autumn' in *Keats, Narrative, and Audience*, pp. 159-171 (p. 160).

² Vendler, 'Peaceful Sway Above Man's Harvesting: *To Autumn*' in *The Odes of John Keats*, pp. 227-288 (p. 270).

³ Vendler, 'Peaceful Sway Above Man's Harvesting', p. 234.

⁴ In a letter to Reynolds of the 21st September 1819, Keats wrote of how the stubble-plains of Winchester inspired him to compose the ode 'To Autumn': 'I never lik'd stubble fields so much as now — Aye better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm — in the same way that some pictures look warm — this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it' (*Letters: John Keats*, II, 167).

goddess Ceres ‘Drowsed with the fume of poppies’ (17) or as she patiently watches intoxicating juices ooze from the ‘cider-press’ (21). Such allusions to opiates and alcohol again show how an excess of bodily sensation is shadowed by the condition of ‘drowsy numbness’ (‘Ode to a Nightingale’, 1), hinting at but never fully committing to the insensibility of Keats’s spring odes. What interests Keats in ‘To Autumn’ is how abundance transmutes into loss. If Keats’s ‘Epistle to J. H. Reynolds’ looks to ‘summer skies’ to show how ‘It is a flaw / In Happiness, to see beyond our bourne—’ (‘Epistle to J. H. Reynolds’, 84 and 82-83), then ‘To Autumn’ gazes upon ‘the maturing sun’ through ‘barrèd clouds’ (‘To Autumn’, 2 and 25) to explore how such happiness ‘forces us [...] to mourn’ (‘Epistle to J. H. Reynolds’, 84), showing how at the moment of bountiful harvest and delightful plenitude, grief and loss are prematurely felt. Keats’s speaker pictures the personified Autumn,

[...] on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare the next swath and all its twinèd flowers’ (16-18).

The compound adjective ‘half-reaped’ weighs the pleasure of fecundity and the anticipation of continued harvest against the anxiety of waste; pleasure is counterpointed by the fear of a failure to reap the furrows before the poet’s ‘pen has gleaned [his] teeming brain’ (‘When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be’, 2).⁵ Keats creates a moment of halted process, allowing the speaker to reflect upon an unobtained plenitude that is also shadowed by the potential for failure and loss. Against a backdrop of suspended productivity, Keats’s rhythmic play sustains the animated productivity of the opening stanza. Trochees in the first feet of lines 17 and 18, and spondees in the third and second feet of lines 16 and 18 respectively, interrupt the iambic pentameter, loading these lines with an energy that demands the reader’s critical attention at the same time as it describes Autumn as inactive and at rest. As with the ‘Ode on Indolence’, Keats continues to investigate how a ‘passive existence’ can be filled with ‘delicious diligent indolence’ (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 231), exploring how ‘he’s awake who thinks himself asleep’ (‘O Thou Whose Face Hath Felt the Winter Wind’, 14). If Keats is celebrating the merits of productive *indolentia*, then the rhythmic intrusions in these lines also foreshadow the violence

⁵ Helen Vendler and Andrew Bennett, amongst others, have explored how ‘To Autumn’ and ‘When I Have Fears that I May Cease to be’ both evoke images of gleaning, garnering, and ripening to describe the activities of the poet. Vendler, ‘Peaceful Sway Above Man’s Harvesting’, p. 234; Bennett, ‘To Autumn’ in *Keats, Narrative, and Audience*, pp. 159-171 (p. 160).

of Autumn's 'hook' (17) as a tool that threatens to destroy the budding (8) potentialities of the poet's imagination. Noticing how these lines are conscious of loss and decay, Vendler writes that 'If the fruits of the earth are not harvested when they are ripe, natural process dictates a continuing into over-ripeness, bursting of skin, rottenness, and death'.⁶ But 'To Autumn' is also alert to the possibility that the fruit of the poet's brain or the grain of the earth might be harvested before it has fully ripened, thereby destroying the opportunity for the 'maturing sun' 'to set budding more, / And still more' (2, and 8-9). Keats creates an ambivalence that sets the potential for waste against the anxiety of a premature harvest.

And yet it is the apprehension of such loss that not only fosters the music of autumn, but also cultivates the song of the speaker. In the final stanza, the 'soft-dying day' is figured as 'bloom[ing]' (24), engendering life in the midst of its own decline. 'Mourn' (27) strikingly rhymes with 'borne' (28) and 'bourn' (30), locating gestation at the centre of grief and drawing attention to the music created by loss itself. Much like the speaker of 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles' whose poetic utterance issues from the 'dizzy pain' of being unable to respond to 'Grecian grandeur' ('On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 11 and 12), the prospect of wasted or failed creativity in 'To Autumn' becomes a source of inspiration that provokes the poet's melancholy outpourings. From a place of 'wailful' (27) sorrow comes a euphony of natural song as Keats fills this stanza with the sound of 'full-grown lambs loud bleat[ing]', 'Hedge-crickets sing[ing]', 'red-breast[s] whistl[ing]', and 'swallows twitter[ing]' (30, 31, 32, and 33). The songs of nature take on an ambivalence in which the defiant celebration of life is held in equipoise with the grief of imminent decay and departure, situating autumn in its rightful position between the generative force of 'o'er-brimm[ing]' summer and the apparent lifelessness of winter's 'crystal fretting' ('In Drear-Nighted December', 14). As O'Neill writes: 'the [third] stanza's celebration of "music" (24) is alert to the cadences of mourning, attaining a composed acceptance of loss, presence, and change'.⁷ Specifically, the cadences of rhyme portend a leave-taking at the same time as they delay an imminent departure, halting the stanza at a moment of change. Keats's experimentation with the rhyme scheme of the ode stanza develops beyond the 10-line formations of the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on Indolence', and 'Ode on Melancholy', organising 'To Autumn' into three stanzas of

⁶ Vendler, 'Peaceful Sway Above Man's Harvesting', p. 247.

⁷ O'Neill, 'Writing and History' in *Self-Conscious Poem*, p. 215.

11 lines rhymed ABABCDECDDE.⁸ The addition of an extra line to the ode stanza mimics the lingering of the ‘gathering swallows’ (33) whose migration is anticipated, but never enacted within the fiction of the poem. More importantly, ‘To Autumn’ introduces a couplet in lines 9 and 10, creating a feeling of closure that is immediately undermined by the final E rhyme. In the final stanza, Keats pairs ‘skies’ (33) with ‘dies’ (29) so at the poem’s ending, the reader is required to look backwards at the level of form, even as we follow the speaker’s gaze upwards to the ‘gathering swallows’ (33) who have not yet departed. Keats’s rhyme prompts a nostalgic backwards glance to the middle of the stanza at the same time as it encourages the reader to imagine the swallow’s future migration and the emptying of life from the autumnal landscape so that the lyric present is paused at a point of transition between life and death. Writing on Keats’s innovations with the ode stanza, Jonathan Mulrooney notices how ‘Keats’s odes mark their own end point, anticipating their own silences’.⁹ But Keats’s premature couplet, sandwiched between the E rhyme, both anticipates and delays its own departure. Through formal experimentation with the ode stanza, Keats enacts a leave-taking that never quite bids adieu, suspending ‘To Autumn’ between the rich ebullience of the season’s music and the ‘wailful’ (27) sorrow of its ‘soft-dying’ (25).

‘Beautiful Circuiting’

‘To Autumn’ epitomises how Keats’s poetry rigorously explores liminality as it pauses at the interchange between pleasure and pain to make the reader contemplate the uncertain and changing connection between affective states. In *Isabella*, the psycho-physiological experience of weeping ambiguously locates Isabella between the pleasures and pains of the mind and body, creating a contradiction within her mental and corporeal lives that the poem refuses to resolve. Such a paradoxical experience of selfhood becomes the focus of *Hyperion* in which Saturn and the Titans struggle to understand grief and loss as part of a process of personal and intellectual advancement. *The Fall of Hyperion* and *The Eve of St Agnes* move outside of selfhood to situate the reader on the peripheries of another’s experience of joy and sorrow, drawing attention to the unsettling and problematic pleasure of gazing upon spectacles of pleasure and pain. The enchantments of poetic vision are filled with imaginative potential at the same time as they evoke the reader’s suspicion and scepticism, an idea that is also central to *Lamia*. The ‘gordian’

⁸ ‘To Autumn’s’ first stanza also introduces a couplet in lines 9 and 10, but departs from this exact rhyme scheme by rhyming ABABCDEDCCE.

⁹ Jonathan Mulrooney, ‘Keats’s “Dull Rhymes” and the Making of the Ode Stanza’, *Literature Compass*, 5 (2008), pp. 935-948 (p. 944).

knot (*Lamia*, I, 47) of this poem teasingly provokes critical choice-making even as it frustratingly denies the pleasure of certainty, forcing the reader to be discontent with *Lamia*'s 'uncertainties, mysteries, doubts' (*Letters: John Keats* I, 193). In the 1819 odes, numbness embodies such negative capability as a felt sensation of absence that intersects with pleasure and pain to complicate any neat categorisation of sensory existence. Together, *Isabella*, the *Hyperion* poems, *The Eve of St Agnes*, *Lamia*, and the 1819 odes all refuse to define the relationship between joy and sorrow, never asserting a single theory of how these experiences interact and instead encouraging the reader to delight in exploring the continually shifting nature of 'pleasure's wreath' and 'pain[']s [...] sting' ('Ode on Indolence', 18).

In his 19th February 1818 correspondence with Reynolds, a letter that is also deeply conscious of seasonal growth and change, Keats writes of how poetry should not push an agenda, but should be an inexhaustible resource that launches the reader on their own 'voyage of conception' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 231). Keats stresses the experiential nature of knowledge. Knowledge is not an exercise in memory, of gathering definable data to be stored and recalled from the mind, but a journey through which one achieves a 'ripeness of intellect' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 231):

any Man may like the spider spin from its own inwards his own airy Citadel — the points of leaves and twigs on which the Spider begins her work are few and she fills the Air with a beautiful circuiting: man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine Webb <sic> of his Soul and weave a tapestry empyrean (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 231-232).

Keats utilises the words 'leaves', 'web', 'weave', and 'tapestry' to create a parallel between the activities of the spider and the process of literary creation. The letter implicitly looks to the etymological roots of 'text' from the Latin 'texere', meaning 'to weave',¹⁰ as well as to the origins of 'weave' from the old Germanic 'web'.¹¹ Threading together natural imagery with such carefully selected language, Keats creates an analogy that likens the spider not only to the

¹⁰ 'Text' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/200002?rskey=vYp3od&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 4/2/2019].

¹¹ 'Weave. v. 1' in *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/226680#eid14794147>> [accessed 4/2/2019]. The *OED* explains how 'web' is also the root of the modern English 'web'.

poet, but also to the reader. Just as the spider leaves a subtle material trace of its journeyings through the air in the form of a web, the letter proposes that art is created through the ‘diverse journeys’ (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 232) of the reader as they explore the nuances of each line of the text. Like the leaves of the tree, which provide only a ‘few points’ to anchor the spider’s ‘beautiful circuiting’, the leaves of the book or the words of the poem are starting points that prompt the reader’s creativity, including us in the delicately woven tapestry of the poem. Keats’s poems do not emphasise an endpoint at which knowledge and understanding will be obtained. Rather, they stress the beauty and pleasures of imaginative and intellectual exploration itself. As Keats’s letter continues: ‘let us not [...] go hurrying about and collecting honey-bee like, buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at: but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive’ (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 232). For Keats, the poem is not a repository from which the reader frantically seeks out knowledge. Instead, Keats suggests that the reader receives more pleasure and wisdom from offering their imaginative energies to the poem than from hungering after a fixed and definite truth to be gleaned from the poet’s words. The letter exalts the gentle movements of the opening flower and the ‘beautiful circuiting’ of the spider as beings that are not limited by the desire to arrive at a fixed conclusion, but as receptive creatures whose beauty and creative potential for ‘blush[ing] deeper’ (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 232) is located in their patient wanderings.

For Keats, artistic pleasure is found in the process of writing, reading, and interpreting each line of the poem, even and perhaps especially in those moments when the ‘convuls[ions] of scarlet pain’ (*Lamia*, I, 154) are felt most keenly and described with agonising specificity. Through the meticulous crafting of literary form and genre, the subtle manipulation of poetic language, and the careful consideration of aesthetic affect, Keats navigates the dynamic relationship between joy and sorrow, utilising the poem as an experimental space through which to tease apart, speculate upon, and test the nature of ‘aching Pleasure’ (‘Ode on Melancholy’, 23). Leigh Hunt astutely noticed such an experimental approach in Keats’s 1819 poetry, writing in his August 1820 review of the *Lamia* volume that: ‘It is remarkable that an age of poetry has grown up with the progress of experiment; and that the very poets, who seem to countenance these notions, accompany them by some of their finest effusions’.¹² The ‘finest effusions’ of Keats’s poems are those moments in which pain and pleasure are experimented with, placed in juxtaposition, and unflinchingly countenanced as experiences that both intensify

¹² Leigh Hunt, ‘Review, *The Indicator*’ in *Keats: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 165-177 (p. 170).

and fold in on each other. Keats's awareness of the advancements that medical experiment could make, his experience investigating the intricate and dark passageways of the human anatomy, and his relish for those poets who explored and articulated a 'Magnitude of Contrast[s]',¹³ informed and influenced his poetic process which rigorously negotiated 'the ballance <sic> of good and evil' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 281), considering the ways in which joy and sorrow are repeatedly shadowed by their counterpart. It is through his exploration of the enigmatic and shifting relationships between pleasure and pain that Keats creates his most 'beautiful circuiting[s]' (*Letters: John Keats*, I, 232).

¹³ 'Keats's Paradise Lost: a Digital Edition', *The Keats Library*, <<http://keatslibrary.org/paradise-lost/>>, book i (p. 3).

Bibliography

- Aikin, John and Anna Laetitia, 'On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Betrand, A Fragment' (1773) in *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1773), pp. 119-137
- Badcoe, Tamsin Theresa, "'The porch of that enchanted gate": Spenserian Influences and the Romance of Place in *Lamia* by John Keats', *Romanticism*, 17 (2011), pp. 351-364
- Bate, Walter Jackson, *John Keats* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963)
- Baudrillard, Jean, 'The Precession of Simulacra' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), pp. 1556-1566
- Bell, Charles, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as Connected with the Fine Arts* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882)
- 'Reprint of the "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain," with Letters &c.', *Journal of Anatomy and Physiology*, 3 (1868), pp. 147-182.
- Bennett, Andrew, *Keats, Narrative, and Audience: The Posthumous Life of Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Blake, William, *William Blake: The Complete Poems*, ed. by Alicia Ostriker, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1977)
- Boccaccio, Giovanni, *The Decameron* (London, Isaac Iagaard, 1620)
- Bourke, Joanna, 'Pain and the Politics of Sympathy, Historical Reflections, 1760s to 1960s' (Universiteit Utrecht: Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen, 2011), pp. 1-47. To access this lecture, please see ISBN: 987-94-6103-011-5

——— *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Pain Killers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Boyiopoulos, Kostas, “‘Enchanted Wine’: Symons, Dowson and Keats’s Intoxications’ in *Decadent Romanticism: 1780-1914*, ed. by Kostas Boyiopoulos and Mark Sandy (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 59-74

Brewer, John, ‘Sentiment and Sensibility’ in *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. by James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 21-44

Brinks, Ellen, ‘The Male Romantic Poet as Gothic Subject: Keats's Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 54 (2000), pp. 427-454

Bruhm, Steven, *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain In Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994)

Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) (R. and I. Dodsley: Pall Mall, 1757)

Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, vols. I-III*, ed. by the Rev. A. R. Shilleto (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896)

Buxton, Dudley Wilmot, ‘Those Who Worked in the Dawn of Anaesthesia. Henry Hill Hickman’, *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 3 (1926), pp. 165-173

Byron, Lord George Gordon, *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (London: Murray, 1973-1996)

Byron, Lord, *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

- Cantor, Paul A., 'The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism', *The Review of Politics*, 69 (2007), pp. 375-401
- Castellano, Katey, "'Why Linger at the Yawning Tomb so Long?': The Ethics of Negative Capability in Keats's *Isabella* and *Hyperion*", *Partial Answers-Journal and the History of Ideas*, 8 (2010), pp. 23-38
- Castle, Terry, 'The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*' in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 120-139
- Challoner, Richard, *The Garden of the Soul: or a Manual of Spiritual Exercises and Instructions for Christians, who Living in the World, Aspire to Devotion* (London: 1775)
- Chambers, Jane, "'For Love's Sake': 'Lamia' and Burton's Love Melancholy", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 22 (1982), pp. 583-600
- Chandler, James, *An Archaeology of Sympathy* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2013)
- Clarke, Bruce, *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis* (New York: State University of New York, 1995)
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 'Biographia Literaria' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Ninth Edition, Volume D, The Romantic Period*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), pp. 488-499
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge The Major Works*, ed. by H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)
- Colvin, Sir Sidney, *John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics, And After-Fame* (London, 1920)

- Cox, Jeffrey N., 'Lamia, Isabella, and *The Eve of St. Agnes*: Eros and "Romance"' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 53-68
- *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Culler, Jonathan, *The Pursuit of Signs Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1981)
- Cummings, Robert, 'Keats's Melancholy in the Temple of Delight', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 36 (1987), pp. 50-62
- Curran, Stuart, "'The Feel of Not to Feel it": The Life of Non-Sensation in Keats' in *John Keats and the Medical Imagination*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine, 2017), pp. 153-172
- Darwin, Erasmus, *Zoonomia, Or the Laws of Organic Life*, Volumes I and II (Dublin: 1796)
- Davies, Jeremy, *Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014)
- Davy, Humphry, *Researches Chemical and Philosophical Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide or Dephlogisticated Nitrous Air, and its Respiration* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1800)
- Day, Thomas, 'Sensuous and Scholarly Reading in Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"', *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary*, 8 (2013), pp. 115-122
- De Almeida, Hermione, *Romantic Medicine and John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)

- Derrida, Jacques, 'Plato's Pharmacy' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), pp. 1697-1734
- De Waal, Marguerite, 'The Poetry of Dream and the Threat of Barrenness in Three Sonnets by John Keats', *English Academic Review*, 33 (2016), pp. 72-86
- Eckstein, Barbara J., 'Torture and Interrogation: J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*' in *The Language of Fiction in a World of Pain Reading Politics as Paradox* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), pp. 68-91
- Edgecombe, Rodney Stenning, 'Keats, Hunt and Soul-Making', *Notes and Queries*, 49 (2002), pp. 37-38
- Endo, Paul, 'Seeing Romantically in *Lamia*', *ELH*, 66 (1999), pp. 111-128
- Evans, Gareth, 'Poison Wine — John Keats and the Botanic Pharmacy', *Keats Shelley Review*, 16 (2002), pp. 31-55
- Everest, Kelvin, 'Isabella in the Market-Place: Keats and Feminism' in *Keats and History*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 107-126
- Fermanis, Porscha, *John Keats and the Ideas of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)
- Fish, Stanley E., 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics' in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins (London; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 70-100
- Franta, Andrew, 'Keats and the Review Aesthetic', *Studies in Romanticism*, 38 (1999), pp. 343-364
- Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XIV, trans. by James Strachey

(London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 2001), pp. 243-258

—— ‘The Uncanny’ in *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin Group, 2003), pp. 121-162

Friedman, Geraldine, ‘The Erotics of interpretation in Keats's “Ode on a Grecian Urn”’: Pursuing the Feminine’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 32 (1993), pp. 225-243

Gadamer, Hans Georg, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. by David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1976)

—— *Truth and Method*, 2nd Edition, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward Ltd, 1989)

Garofalo, Daniela, ““Give me that voice again... Those looks immortal””: Gaze and Voice in Keats's The Eve of St. Agnes’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 49 (2010), pp. 353-373

Gibson, Walker, ‘Authors, Speakers, Readers and, Mock Readers’ in *Reader-Response Criticism From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tomkins (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 1-6

Gigante, Denise, *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (London: Tale University Press, 2009)

—— ‘The Monster in the Rainbow: Keats and the Science of Life’, *PMLA*, 117 (2002), pp.433-448

Gittings, Robert, *The Odes of Keats, and their Earliest Known Manuscripts* (London: Heinemann, 1970)

Goellnicht, Donald C., ‘Keats on Reading: “Delicious Diligent Indolence”’, *Journal of English and German Philology*, 88 (1989), pp. 190-210

- *The Poet-Physician Keats and Medical Science* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984)
- Haney, David, 'Viewing "the Viewless Wings of Poesy": Gadamer, Keats, and Historicity', *Clio*, 18 (1989), pp. 103-122
- Hayter, Alethea, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968)
- Hazlitt, William, *An Essay On the Principles of Human Action* (London: J. Johnson, 1805)
- *Lectures on the English Poets*, 3rd edition, (London: J. Templeman)
- Hinton, Laura, *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy Sadomasochistic Sentiments from Clarissa to Rescue 911* (New York: State University of New York, 1999)
- Hoeveler, Diane Long, 'Decapitating Romance: Class, Fetish, and Ideology in Keats's *Isabella*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 49 (1994), pp. 321-338
- Hogle, Jerrold E., 'The Gothic-Romantic Relationship: Underground Histories in "The Eve of St. Agnes"', *European Romantic Review*, 14 (2003), pp. 205-223
- Holmes, Richard, *The Age of Wonder* (London: Harper Press, 2008)
- Holstein, Michael E., 'Keats: The Poet-Healer and the Problem of Pain', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 36 (1987), pp. 32-49
- Homans, Margaret, 'Keats Reading Women, Women Reading Keats', *Studies in Romanticism*, 29 (1990), pp. 341-370
- Hunter, John, *A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation, and Gun-Shot Wounds* (London: 1794)
- Hurley, Michael and Michael O'Neill, *Poetic Form An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

‘Irritability and Sensibility: The Forces of Life’, *Medical History*, 28 (1984), pp. 47-65

Jackson, Noel, *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Jackson, Stevi and Sue Scott, ‘Embodying Orgasm: Gendered Power Relations and Sexual Pleasure’, *Women & Therapy*, 24 (2002), pp. 99-110

Janowitz, Anne, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Kabitoğlu, E. Douka, *Plato and the English Romantics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990)

Kay, Andrew, ‘Conspiring with Keats: Toward a Poetics of Breathing’, *European Romantic Review*, 27 (2016), pp. 563-81

Keach, William, *Arbitrary Power, Romanticism, Language, Politics* (Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2004)

—— ‘Byron Reads Keats’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 203-213

Keats, John, *Keats’s Anatomical and Physiological Note Book*, ed. by Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934)

—— *John Keats The Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard, 3rd edition (London: Penguin Group, 1988).

—— *John Keats The Major Works*, ed. by Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

—— *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1818*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958).

Keats The Critical Heritage, ed. by G. M. Matthews (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1971).

‘Keats’s Paradise Lost: a Digital Edition’, *The Keats Library*,
<<http://keatslibrary.org/paradise-lost/>>.

Kenner, Hugh, ‘Rhyme An Unfinished Monograph’, *Common Knowledge*, 10 (2004), pp. 377-425

Kern, Robert, ‘Keats and the Problems of Romance’ in *The Philological Quarterly*, 58 (1979), pp. 171-191

Keys, T. E., ‘Historical Vignettes: Henry Hill Hickman (1800-1830)’, *Anaesthesia and Analgesia*, 51 (1972), p. 349

Khalip, Jacques, ‘Virtual Conduct: Disinterested Agency in Hazlitt and Keats’, *ELH*, 73 (2006), pp. 885-912

Kucich, Greg, ‘Keats and English Poetry’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 186-202

——— *Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

Lagory, Michael, ‘Wormy Circumstance: Symbolism in Keats’s *Isabella*’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 34 (1995), pp. 321-342

Lau, Beth, ‘Madeline at Northanger Abbey: Keats’s Anti Romances and Gothic Satire’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 84 (1985), pp. 30-50

Leavis, F. R., *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936)

- Lee, Raymond L. Jr and Alistair B. Fraser, *The Rainbow Bridge: Rainbows in Art, Literature and Science* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001)
- Levinson, Marjorie, *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of Style* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988)
- Lieberman, Matthew D., Johanna M. Jarcho, Steve Berman, Bruce D. Naliboff, Brandall Y. Suyenobu, Mark Mandelkern, and Emeran A. Mayer, 'The Neural Correlates of Placebo Effects: A Disruption Account', *NeuroImage*, 22 (2004), pp. 447-455
- Macksey, Richard, 'Keats and the Poetics of Extremity', *MLN*, 99 (1984), pp. 845-884
- Mathes, Carmen Faye, "'Let us not therefore go hurrying about": Towards an Aesthetics of Passivity in Keats's Poetry', *European Romantic Review*, 25 (2014), pp. 309-318
- McDowell, Stacey, 'Grotesque Organicism in Keats's *Isabella; Or, the Pot of Basil*', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 24 (2010), pp. 22-28
- McDowell, Stacey, 'Shiftiness in Keats's "Ode on Indolence"', *Romanticism*, 23 (2017), pp. 27-37
- McGann, Jerome J., *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998)
- Mellor, Anne K., 'Keats and the Complexities of Gender' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2004), pp. 214-229
- Mellor, Anne, *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993)
- Menin, Marco, "'Who Will Write the History of Tears?'" History of Ideas and History of Emotions from Eighteenth-Century France to the Present', *History of European Ideas*, 40 (2014), pp. 516-532

- Milton, John, 'Lycidas' in *The Norton Anthology English Literature The Sixteenth Century and The Early Seventeenth Century*, Vol. B, Ninth Edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), p. 1918-1923
- 'Paradise Lost' in *The Norton Anthology English Literature The Sixteenth Century and The Early Seventeenth Century*, Vol. B, Ninth Edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), pp. 1831-2055
- Mizukoshi, Ayumi, *Keats, Hunt and the Aesthetics of Pleasure* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)
- Morris, David B., 'Gothic Sublimity', *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, 16 (1985), pp. 299-319
- Mullan, John, 'Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians', *The Eighteenth Century*, 25 (1984), pp. 141-174
- Mulrooney, Jonathan, 'Keats's Avatar', *European Romantic Review*, 22 (2011), pp. 313-321
- 'Keats's "Dull Rhymes" and the Making of the Ode Stanza', *Literature Compass*, 5 (2008), pp. 935-948
- Murray, J. Middleton, *Keats* (New York: Noonday Press, 1955)
- Newey, Vincent, 'Hyperion, *The Fall of Hyperion*, and Keats's Epic Ambitions' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 69-85
- O'Connell, Anita, 'Visions in Verse: Writing the Visual in Romantic Dream Visions', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 48 (2015), pp. 35-54

- Ogden, John T., 'The Power of Distance in Wordsworth's Prelude', *PMLA*, 88 (1973), pp. 246-259
- O'Gorman, Francis, 'Coleridge, Keats, and the Science of Breathing', *Essays in Criticism*, 61 (2011), pp. 365-381
- Olshansky, David, 'A Comparative Analysis of Sensation and Reflection within John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 17 (2003), pp. 27-33
- O'Neill, Michael, *John Keats in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)
- 'Lamia: "Things real— Things Semi real— and No things"' in *The Challenge of Keats: Bicentenary Essays 1795-1995*, ed. by Allan C. Christensen et. al (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 125-144
- 'Poetry as Literary Criticism' in *The Arts and Sciences of Criticism*, ed. David Fuller and Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 117-136
- *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- 'Second-Generation Romantic Poets 2: Shelley and Keats' in *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. by Michael O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 524-541
- Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. by Mary M. Innes (Baltimore: Penguin Books Ltd, 1955)
- Palmer, Richard E., 'The Liminality of Hermes and the Meaning of Hermeneutics', <<https://www.mac.edu/faculty/RichardPalmer/liminality.html>> [accessed 13/5/2016]
- Parsons, Coleman O., 'Primitive Sense in "Lamia"', *Folklore*, 88 (1977), pp. 203-210

- Perkins, David, *The Quest for Permanence The Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959)
- Perkins, Lisa Heiserman, 'Keats's Mere Speculations', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 43 (1994), pp. 56-74.
- Phillips, Adam, *On Flirtation* (London: Faber, 1994)
- Plato, *The Symposium*, trans by. Christopher Gill (London; Penguin Books Ltd., 1999).
- Pope, Alexander, 'The Rape of the Lock' in *Alexander Pope The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 77-100
- Radcliffe, Ann, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16 (1826), pp. 145-152.
- Rajan, Tilottama, 'The Supplement of Reading', *New Literary History*, 17 (1986), pp. 573-594
- Rawes, Alan, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation: Childe Harold, the Tales, and the Quest for Comedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000)
- 'Review of Matthew G. Lewis *The Monk* (February, 1797)', *The Critical Review* (London: The Critical Review, 1797), pp. 194-200
- Richardson, Alan, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)
- Ricks, Christopher, *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974)
- Robinson, Victor, *Victory Over Pain, a History of Anesthesia* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1946)
- Roe, Nicholas, *John Keats* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2012)

- *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).
- ed. *John Keats and the Medical Imagination* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine, 2017).
- Rohrbach, Emily, Emily Sun, 'Reading Keats, Thinking Politics: An Introduction', *Studies in Romanticism*, 50 (2011), pp. 229-237
- Rossetti, William Michael, *Life of John Keats* (London: Walter Scott, 1887)
- Rousseau, C. S., 'Literature and Medicine: Towards a Simultaneity of Theory and Practice', *Literature and Medicine*, 5 (1986), pp. 152-181
- Ruthven, K. K., 'Keats and "Dea Moneta"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 15 (1976), pp. 445-459
- Ryan, Robert M., *Keats The Religious Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976)
- Sade, Marquis de, *Justine or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, ed. by Alan Hull Walton (London: Neville Spearman Ltd, 1964)
- Sandy, Mark, 'Dream Lovers and Tragic Romance: Negative Fictions in Keats's *Lamia*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Isabella*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 20 (2000)
- Sato, Toshihiko, 'A Reevaluation of Keats's "Ode on Indolence" with Special Attention to its Stanzaic Order', *Philological Quarterly*, 68 (1989), pp. 195-213
- Scarry, Elaine, *The Body in Pain The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- Schulkins, Rachel, *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014)
- Scott, Grant F., 'Keats's the Eve of St Agnes', *The Explicator*, 49 (1991), pp. 146-149

- Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: MacMillan Publishers Ltd, 2008)
- *The Norton Anthology of Shakespeare*, 3rd ed., ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et. al (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).
- Sheats, Paul D., ‘Stylistic Discipline in “The Fall of Hyperion”’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 17 (1968), pp. 75-88.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, *Percy Bysshe Shelley The Major Works*, ed. by Zachery Leader and Michael O’Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Sherwin, Paul, ‘Dying into Life: Keats's Struggle with Milton in Hyperion’, *PMLA*, 93 (1978), pp. 383-395
- Sider, Michael, ‘Isabella and the Dialogism of Romance’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 22 (2000), pp. 329-356
- Sitters, Joseph C., ‘“Platonic Shades” in Keats’s Lamia’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 83 (1984), pp. 200-213
- Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Printed for A. Millar, A. Kincaid, and J. Bell, 1759)
- Smith, Louise Z., ‘The Material Sublime: Keats and “Isabella”’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 13 (1974), pp. 299-311
- Snow, Stephanie J., *Blessed Days of Anaesthesia: How anaesthetics changed the world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Sontag, Susan, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)
- Sperry, Stuart M. Jr., ‘Keats and the Chemistry of Poetic Creation’, *PMLA*, 85 (1970), pp. 268-277

- *Keats the Poet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973)
- ‘The Allegory of Endymion’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 2 (1962), pp. 38-53
- Stabler, Jane, *Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
- Stevenson, Warren, ‘A Stab at the Gordian Knot’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 11 (1972), pp. 241-252
- Stillinger, Jack, *The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems* (Urbana; London: University of Illinois Press, 1971)
- Sykes, Keith and John Bunker, *Anaesthesia and the Practice of Medicine: Historical Perspectives* (London: Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd., 2011)
- Symons, John, ‘The Quest for Hickman’, *Medical History*, 43(1999), pp. 95-107
- Taylor, Anya, *Bacchus in Romantic England Writers and Drink 1780-1830* (Basingstoke; London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999)
- ‘Superhuman Silence: Language in *Hyperion*’, *Studies in English Literature*, 19 (1979), pp. 673-687
- Thomson, Heidi, ‘Eavesdropping on “The Eve of St. Agnes”: Madeline's Sensual Ear and Porphyro's Ancient Ditty’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97 (1998), pp. 337-351
- Throsby, Corin, ‘Being Neither Here Nor There: Byron and the Art of Flirtation’ in *Byron's Ghosts: The Spectral, The Spiritual and the Supernatural*, ed. by Gavin Hopps (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 202-214

- Tontiplaphol, Betsy Winakur, *Poetics of Luxury in the Nineteenth Century: Keats, Tennyson, and Hopkins* (Routledge: New York, 2016)
- Trilling, Lionel, 'The Fate of Pleasure' in *Partisan Review*, 30 (1963), pp. 167-191
- *The Opposing Self* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968)
- Turley, Richard Margraff, *Keats's Boyish Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004)
- Vendler, Helen, *Coming of Age as a Poet* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003)
- 'The Experiential Beginnings of Keats's Odes', *Studies in Romanticism*, 12 (1973), pp. 591-606
- *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983)
- Ward, Aileen, 'Keats and Burton: A Reappraisal', *Philological Quarterly*, 40 (1961), pp. 535-552
- Wasserman, Earl R., *The Finer Tone Keats's Major Poems* (Westport, Connecticut: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953)
- Wawrzinek, Jennifer, 'John Keats and the Ethics of Disappearance', *Anglia-Zeitschrift Fur Englische Philologie*, 128 (2010) pp. 431-445
- Webb, Timothy, "'Cutting Figures": Rhetorical Strategies in Keats's Letters' in *Keats Bicentenary Readings*, ed. by Michael O'Neill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 144-169
- Welch, William Henry, 'A Consideration of the Introduction of Surgical Anaesthesia' in *Papers and Addresses*, Vol. 3 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1920)

- White, H. W., Neville Rogers, 'The Vale of Tears in Keats, Shelley and Others', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, 24 (1973), pp. 16-18
- Whitley, Alvin, 'The Autograph of Keats's "In Drear Nighted December"', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 5 (1951), pp. 116-122
- Whytt, Robert, *An Essay on the Vital and Other Involuntary Motions of Animals* (Edinburgh: Printed by Hamilton, Balfour, and Neill, 1751)
- *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders which have been commonly called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysterical* (Edinburgh: Printed for T. Becket, and P. Du Hondt, and J. Balfour, 1765)
- Wolfson, Susan, *Formal Charges The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)
- 'Keats and the Manhood of the Poet', *European Romantic Review*, 6 (1995), pp. 1-37
- 'Keats's 'Isabella' and the 'Digressions' of Romance', *Criticism*, 27 (1985), pp. 247-261
- 'Keats the Letter-Writer: Epistolary Poetics', *Romanticism Past and Present*, 6 (1982), pp. 43-61
- *Reading John Keats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- *The Questioning Presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the Interrogative Mode in Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986)
- Wordsworth, William, *The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)

Yeats, W. B., *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright, Everyman ([1990] London: J. M. Dent, 1994)

Zeigenhagen, Timothy, 'Keats, Professional Medicine, and the Two Hyperions', *Literature and Medicine*, 21 (2002), pp. 281-305