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THE "LITTLE" CHANGE IN KEATS'S INTELLECT:  
DYING INTO LIFE IN ENDYMION

by

Christine Jackman

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1990

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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## Abstract

John Keats's development as a poet was self-consciously planned. In his letters, he theorized about poetic identity, subjectivity, and the imagination. In his poetry he enacted his ideas. In a very short time, Keats progressed from a respectful novice, imitating poetry's voices, to an expert with a strong voice, the subject of his own poetic discourse. Both Keats's theorizing and his practical development correspond with Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories about the development of the subject in and of language.

Both the Keatsian and psychoanalytic myths deal with the formation of the subject and identity. Both foreground the role and function of language, an other, gendered being, and sexuality. In his letters, Keats deals broadly with issues of poetic identity, its formation and nature. Throughout his poetry, he engages repeatedly with sexuality and with the feminine: he authors and authorizes his own poetic subjectivity with, through, and reflected from the female. The early Keatsian feminine is simultaneously maternal and erotic. Later association with the feminine is problematic, involving separation, impotence, even death. The change in the feminine and the change in Keats as a poet occur with the writing of Endymion, through which Keats expressly embarked on a trial of himself as an apprentice poet.

Endymion enacts the crucial moment in the taking on of subjectivity. Endymion, who many critics agree is Keats, proceeds from the unselfconscious world of pure presence (Flora and old Pan), through a phase of narcissistic identification with the Moon, to a position from which he renounces that relationship as self annihilating (the world of Lacan's Symbolic). Threatened with castration by the symbolic Father (Law, Name, Language), Endymion renounces the dyadic relationship in which he is the completion of Cynthia, and appropriates the Symbolic phallus.

After Endymion, Keats and his poetry change. Woman is either nurturing or erotic, never both. Much of the poetry foregrounds absence and desire. In short, the Word mediates the truth of the imagination. Only from within the Symbolic, as subject of his own poetic discourse, can Keats write with an awareness of the gap which separates him from the unselfconscious and full-throated ease of the nightingale.

For Ken



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## Preface

To paraphrase Roland Barthes: a thesis functions from the first word: it must therefore stand on its own.

Nonetheless before beginning the journey, I would like to offer some signposts for its origin and direction (ix).

I have chosen to read Keats with and through the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan knowing full well that to a certain extent I am imposing a foreign vocabulary and interpretive structure on Keats. However, much in both Keats's prose and poetry resonates easily with many Lacanian concepts and with the structure of their relations. Absence, desire, Woman, sexuality, mortality, identity, and an overwhelming concern with language--together these terms and concepts might well form the "short list" which characterizes each writer.

In addition to imposing on Keats, I am also doing Lacan a disservice. Most of Jacques Lacan's readers readily admit the difficulties in approaching his writing. Reducing his complex and often opaque formulations to a coherent program of concepts is a rendering in the sense of making something of his thought available, and in the sense of separating and extracting. In either case, much is left behind. However, I have done exactly that in order to give readers the basic premises and general shape of what in Lacan's theory seems to relate directly to Keats.

To this end, following my initial introduction, I have included a fairly lengthy section outlining Lacan's formulations as they apply to both the process and structure of becoming a human subject in and of signification. I have kept this part separate from any consideration of Keats in order to provide a general basis and reference for what follows. In the second chapter, I have read Keats with Lacan in a general way, and have focused particularly on Keats's concerns with poetry and poetic identity in his letters. Although much of Keats's writing deals with the issues mentioned above, in Endymion they all converge and signal a change in both the poet and his poetry. The chapter on this poem is a close reading in which the detail of the theory is the most telling and persuasive. In the conclusion, I have looked generally at Keats's later poetry with emphasis on the results of the shift which occurs with the writing of Endymion and the implications of that shift for Keats's poetic program.

## Introduction

### Keats, Poetic Subjectivity, and the Feminine

From the most juvenile to the most sophisticated, many of Keats's poems directly involve association with Woman and the feminine. In settings, in the personal involvement of the characters, and in descriptive passages, traditional aspects of femininity appear again and again. Bowers, grottos, and coverts are overwhelmingly feminine and provide both scene and sanctuary. Love relationships are the subject of some of the best and most famous poems. Generally there is much that is voluptuous, pouting, tender, and curving in Keats's work. Whether positive or negative, a source of pleasure or frustration, union or separation, relations with the feminine shape much of Keats's writing. Throughout, Keats authors and authorizes his own poetic subjectivity with, through, and reflected from the feminine and the sexual.

However, as he develops as a poet, Keats changes the meaning and influence of the female. In his early poetry, Keats portrays the feminine as sweet, nurturing, erotic and maternal, and seems genuinely unaware of any possible contradictions or taboos involved. Association with the feminine is healthful, easing, ardent, and enriching. Much of the early poetry seems possible only because Keats finds himself emerging with it fully processed from a "lucid womb". In his later work, he depicts females and much that

surrounds them as problematic and dual-natured. Association with the feminine in the mature poetry often involves separation and impotence, and sometimes even death. The dividing line between early and later versions of the feminine occurs with the writing of Endymion. Keats set out in a very self-conscious and determined way to create himself as a poet. With Endymion, he expressly embarked on a creative process as a trial for himself as an apprentice poet. In this poem, the taking on of poetic subjectivity and the change in the nature of the female converge. In a poem ripe with bowers and involvement, particularly sexual involvement, with Woman, Keats stops speaking with a hesitant and awkwardly borrowed voice and takes on a strong voice of his own. A coherent and consistent connection exists between Keats's changing treatment of femininity and sexuality and his development as a poet, both as it unfolds in the poetry and as he theorizes about it in the letters. The formulations of psychoanalysis provide a framework with which to articulate this connection.

Psychoanalytic concerns and Keatsian concerns are remarkably similar. Both deal with the formation of a subject; and both connect subjectivity to gender and sexuality. Although the differences are obvious and real, they are differences of approach more than of content. Psychoanalysis deals with the human self and subject, while Keats is concerned, beyond general humanity, with the poet and poetic subjectivity. Psychoanalysis speaks directly

about sexuality and gender and their function in the formation of the conscious being : Psychoanalytic discourse is the articulation of these connections.<sup>1</sup> Keats's discourse is about poetic identity and poetry and their connections. However, in many of Keats's poems, particularly the early ones where he is most concerned with writing his poetic self into existence, gender and sexuality are integral parts of the text. To paraphrase Shoshana Felman, Keats knows that he knows, but does not know what it is that he knows of this link (qtd. in Swann 81). Furthermore, the poetry itself is both the vehicle for and product of poetic subjectivity. Thus, in Keats's writing, the connection between gender and sex is inseparable from language.

Jacques Lacan's rendering of psychoanalytic theory is an interesting and illuminating construct through which to read Keats. Lacan formulated the theoretical relation between sexuality, gender, subjectivity, and language. The Lacanian nexus, based on the split subject, lack and desire, provides a vocabulary with which to approach both Keats's poetry and his prose formulations of poetic theory. The intent, here, is not to analyze Keats the man. However, man and poet are somewhat inseparable, especially in view of how the Romantics so deeply connect them. Also, many circumstances of Keats's life lend themselves well to such an interpretation: Thomas Keats's untimely death when Keats was a young boy; his mother's hasty remarriage; her

temporary disappearance from her children's lives;<sup>2</sup> and, finally, her death during Keats's early adolescence. No doubt these factors are part of Keats the poet and his poetry. However, it seems both facile and uncertain to read such a rich and complex poetic project with too much weight placed on the biographical facts of Keats's childhood. As an adult, albeit a very young one, Keats set out deliberately to create his poetic self; and only through writing could he realize his goal. As Geoffrey Hartman notes: "self-identity is not possible without speech" (xi). For Keats, poetic-identity, that is to call oneself "poet," is not possible without poetry.<sup>3</sup> Through the poetry, a process can be traced, the deliberate and thought out "growing up" of a poet. The point is here, that the formation of human subjectivity in psychoanalysis and the deliberate taking on of poetic subjectivity in Keats's writing follow the same pattern. What follows is a necessary introduction to Lacan's theory, outlining his formulations about human subjectivity as they relate to Keats.

#### A Lacanian Dying into Life

According to Lacan, the human self, as distinct from the human creature, comes into existence when the very young child sees and hears an image of itself reflected back to it, particularly in a mirror and in the mother's gaze and

verbal responses. For the child, the verbal and visual reflections, images ('imagos'), form the source and basis for its identification of a self to itself. And, throughout life, these images provide, inescapably, the foundation of self-identification. Prior to this occurrence, Lacan's mirror stage, the child exists as a chaotic and non-unified body undifferentiated from the objects of its environment. Lacan sees the imago as a "Gestalt" which enables the child to perceive itself as a unity. The energies and instincts that are the body continue, but in an altered perception. And the perception of unity never is, nor can be, either a complete representation or expression of the life of the body. Something always remains uncaptured and disorganized beyond the imaginary representation of self to self. This something, in Lacan's formulation, is the Real, which is equivalent to the impossible, because it is absolutely unapproachable either by image or symbol. The Real remains forever beyond the "Gestalt." Thus, the human self is fundamentally split. Its self-image is only an image--Lacan's Imaginary. In the Imaginary, the source of the self's only identification is a misrecognition of itself as *other*. And the misrecognized other always is one which has already left a remainder of itself forever within but beyond.

In the Imaginary, the child also has a primary and narcissistic relationship to the mother. She is the first and most important object which reflects the child to



itself. As such the mother is the recipient and focus of the child's libidinal drives. More importantly, the child imagines a relationship in which it is the only object of the mother's desire. For the child to take on full human subjectivity, the entry of a third term is required, and that term is the Father, or more precisely, the Name, Law and Language of the Father. This position, distinct from the flesh and blood father, represents authority and social structure--precisely the family structure of Mother, Father, Child. The Father prohibits the child's fulfillment of its libidinal and imaginary relationship with the mother. He is the authority to which the Mother refers and, within the cultural formation, the legitimate focus of her libido; and although the primary prohibition is against incest, the fact that the Father prohibits, period, initiates the triangularity through which the child becomes a social, linguistic being.

Human subjectivity comes into being with the child's entry into the Lacanian Symbolic--the register incorporating Law, Name, and Language. This process,

...the first social imperative of renunciation, inaugurat[es], through ... castration of the child's original desire, both the necessity of repression and the process of symbolic substitution of objects of desire ... While the child is learning how to speak, signifiers of incestuous desire are repressed, become

unspeakable, and the desire is displaced onto substitutive signifiers of desire. This is what the Oedipus complex mythically, schematically, accounts for: the constitution of the Symbolic, through the coincidence of the child's introduction into language and of the constitution of his (linguistic) unconscious. (Felman 104)

The human creature is now a human subject; subject of and subject to language. The subject is determined by signifiers, or the Symbolic order: A system of arbitrary differential signifiers as Saussure and Jakobson formulated it (Sheridan ix).<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the human subject, both originally constituted and continuing only through an outside agency, is a self of "radical ex-centricity to itself" (Lacan, Écrits 171). It exists because of the desire of what is extrinsic to it--the Other. The "castration of the child's original desire," occurring through its entry into language--its constitution through something outside--coupled with the split between itself and its image of itself are the basis for lack and concomitant desire. As Lacan writes, "... the moment in which desire becomes human is also that in which the child is born into Language" (Speech and Language 83). Needs, for the subject, are always alienated because they

are subjected to demand ... precisely ... the putting into signifying form as such and ... the fact that it is from the place of the Other that

his message is emitted.

What is thus alienated in needs constitutes an *Urverdrangung* (primal repression) because it cannot, by definition, be articulated in demand. But it appears in a residue which then presents itself in man as desire...

(Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 80)

And desire, simply as desire itself, is represented along an endless chain of signifiers with no ultimate signified; for that mythical signified is precisely only the abyss on which articulation is constituted in the first place. Absence. Lack. Thus, only in and through language is the human subject aware of a lack which can never be satisfied. But we can never cease in the attempt, because the self which exists in the order of signification would be eliminated were it able to liberate itself from its signifiers.

The abyss is veiled by the representation of a mystical and mythical ultimate signified, a marker which pretends to and glorifies its existence and ultimate meaning--the phallus, the imago of transcendence:

... the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function in the intrasubjective economy of analysis might lift the veil from that which it served in the mysteries. For it is to this signified that it is given to designate as a whole the effect of there being a signified, inasmuch as

it conditions any such effect by its presence as signifier. (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 79-80)

As signifier, however, the phallus is fraudulent. It marks an absence but pretends to a presence. And the presence which the phallus supports is that of the Other. However, as Lacan points out there is "no Other of the Other" (Feminine Sexuality 151), no absolute ground to the circulating and differential nature of signifiers. Thus Jacqueline Rose states: "The Other ... stands against the phallus--its pretence to meaning and false consistence. It is from the Other that the phallus seeks authority and is refused" (51). The phallus stands for nothing, but knowledge and belief rest on the false supposition that it represents ultimate presence.

The phallus functions in a way which involves both the dyadic Imaginary and triadic Symbolic registers. Within this relationship are centered the anxiety of castration and resolution of the castration complex in the Oedipal phase--the process by which the person becomes a subject in and of language. It is precisely because the process is so played out around primary issues of the libidinal drives and the erotic "possession" of the mother, that the phallus takes on such significance. In the dyadic relationship with the mother, the child desires to be the sole object of her desire. As Richard Boothby notes: "Human desire is essentially desire of the other's desire" (148). And, for Lacan, "[i]f the desire of the mother is the phallus, the

child wishes to be the phallus so as to satisfy this desire" (Feminine Sexuality 83). Thus, the castration of this, the child's original desire and identification, is tantamount to the death of the self. In the Imaginary, castration anxiety is not anxiety over the possibility of the literal loss of the penis; it is rather anxiety about the possibility of the loss of the narcissistic and imaginary self--a loss of the imaginary and unifying structure of the ego; it is also the loss of the mother as love object, one that the child never possessed (Boothby 149). In the Imaginary register, the phallus represents fullness and completion.

In negotiation of the Oedipal phase the child moves away from narcissistic involvement with the mother and develops, through language (because of language), the symbolizing capacity which guides its relationships in society. The dual relationship of mother and child is severed when the desire of the mother is symbolically directed, through the family triangle, towards the Father. The child can no longer "be" the phallus and survive. Without entry into language and a symbolic positional nomination, the child would suffer a castration involving the dismemberment and breaking up of the imaginary Gestalt on which its self-image rests. Additionally, the desire to "be" the phallus can never be articulated--it is repressed for the very sake of survival and unity. The Father, his Name and Law, institutes the signifying chain along which this repressed desire is articulated, but always as

something else. Within the Symbolic triangularity of the family, the Father, with his Language, Law, and authority, possesses the phallus--the fraudulent signifier for the mythical transcendence upon which his authority is based. The child gives up, must give up, its imaginary identification as the phallus--its image of fullness and completion. The threat of castration in the Oedipal structure facilitates entirely the entry of the imaginary self into the realm of language. Rather than face annihilation, the child, through language, becomes a subject in and of signification. Its image of itself as phallic completion is replaced by its nomination in a register in which the phallus is a symbolic but fraudulent pretence to presence and fullness--a signifier of an impossible plenitude forever deferred.

After completion of the Oedipal phase, the child is subject of and to gendered identity. The subject is constituted on one side or the other of the bipolar differential structure of masculine-feminine, with the phallus as the marker for that difference. Within the family structure, the child must take up a position as either "son" or "daughter." These positions refer back in no way to an anatomical real. Masculinity and femininity "take on their meaning only in...the symbolic register" (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 109). Gendered difference based on possession of the phallus is a cultural construct occurring only in and because of entry into language. Only

through these positions, the linguistic designations "Father," "Mother," "Child" can the subject exist and be humanly conscious. In this way, Lacan sees the Oedipal triangle as identical to language. It is "not a signified but a signifier, not a meaning but a structure" (Felman 103). "The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of nature" (Lacan, Écrits 66). Sons and fathers, in cultural signification, possess the phallus. They wield the prime signifier. Daughters and mothers are defined--constituted--as not having the phallus. Woman is "not-man."

Woman's position in the "kingdom of culture" is an integral part of its structure. While the female is in no way equivalent to subjectivity, it cannot exist without her. Because Woman, in the system of culture, is man's binary opposite and differential term, she occupies a necessary, but ambiguous and potentially threatening position. On the one hand, Woman stands in her negativity as guarantor of the positive male term. The male can define himself by what he is not. On the other hand, the system rests entirely on its negative term. As Lacan writes:

*The woman can only be written with The crossed through. There is no such thing as The woman, where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such thing as The woman*

since of her essence... she is not all.

(Feminine Sexuality 144)

However, in her being "not all," woman has something beyond what is signifiable and that is her *jouissance*--an ambiguous term encompassing " 'enjoyment', 'possession', 'appropriation', 'right', 'pleasure' " (Wilden 100), all with and in addition to a sexual connotation. Regarding her body and sexuality, woman has "in relation to what the phallic function designates of *jouissance*, a supplementary *jouissance*" (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 144). As we have seen, the residue and excess of somatic life is not captured in signification; it is always there, but outside of the signifying system. In the male, this absence is covered over with the phallic signifier. The *jouissance* of the body, the real penis is mortgaged (Silverman 185) to the existence of the subject in the Symbolic order. The phallus stands not for the penis, but for its absence as part of that order. Thus, the excess and remainder, for man, is given its symbol--the primary one--which underlies signification. In other words, for the male the excess of the body remains and functions against the organization of the ego. However, with the entry into language and the taking on of gendered identity, the signifier "phallus" pretends to access and articulate that remainder. The male has something of his own; he has an investment in the authority of the masculine term about which he can do nothing other than believe it to fully express his



masculinity. The Other forces him to mortgage his maleness to his masculinity. To experience jouissance, then, for the body to live it, is to step outside the Symbolic order, in essence, to lose oneself as a subject in and of signification. As Lacan expresses it: "short of castration, that is, short of something which says no to the phallic function, man has no chance of enjoying the body of the woman, in other words, of making love" (Feminine Sexuality 143).

The jouissance of the female has no corresponding signifier. It stands outside the Symbolic register and undermines it in a complex and somewhat paradoxical way. In the cultural order of signification, woman, as man's binary opposite, functions as a complementary jouissance, the completion of him. The two halves become one. Woman takes up the position as guarantor that lack and fundamental absence do not exist. Ultimate and absolute union with her would effect an end to deferral along the signifying chain. She allows for the disavowal that there is always an irremediable gap in the formation of the self. Thus woman is a fantasy of presence. In this, she is closely allied with other fantasies of presence--the phallus, God, transcendence, and ultimate meaning. However, woman is also the locus of that absence upon which the Symbolic is predicated and through which subjects take up their positions within it. The fear of castration finds its meaning and justification in her: she has neither penis nor

phallus. And sexual association with her, saying "no to the phallic function" as it does, makes of woman the place of absence and lack--the devouring, castrating bitch. She is both fantasy and impossibility, completion resulting in One and supplement attesting to the "not all" of One. Woman is "*beyond the phallus*" (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 145).

## Reading Keats through Lacan

As we have seen through the brief and, of necessity, reductive outline of Lacanian formulations, issues surrounding Woman are rarely straightforward and clearcut. They are, rather, intimately interwoven with issues of the subject in language--the ego, imaginary identifications, castration, gendered being, absence, lack, desire, and signification. Within Keats's portrayals, connections, and disharmonies with the female and feminine are the same issues. As Karen Swann observes: "Lacan's Woman is close cousin of Keats's--she is complement and absolute Other, faithful lover and transcendent value, truth, poetry, and unconscious all at once" (84). Keats deals repeatedly with this enigmatic and paradoxical illusion. On the one hand, she variously takes on the role of Mother, lover, or transcendent being and occupies the place of unity at the end of desire. On the other hand, Woman is the locus of lack and uncertainty. She is the castrating witch, the lamia, La Belle Dame, the being with whom sexual association is "self-destroying" (Endymion I.799). Not only is it true that the female is this paradox in Keats's poetry; she also becomes this creature within the unfolding of his poetic development.

After Endymion Keatsian women are different. In Endymion, Keats becomes a poet through a process in which the double and paradoxical nature of the female is the

necessary foundation for that subjectivity. In Keats's "kingdom" of poetry, the relation between Woman and subjectivity is one of necessity rather than equivalence, as it is in Lacan's "kingdom of culture." The development of the poet as a subject within poetic discourse involves Keats in a becoming which propels him through the Imaginary, the threat of castration, and entry into the Symbolic with the concomitant primacy of the phallus as signifier and the positioning of Woman as Other.

Of course, no absolute correlation between the development of human subjectivity and that of the poet is possible. In Lacan's theory, there is both process and structure. Although the child develops through stages, from an undifferentiated Real, through the Imaginary and into Language, the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic continue to play off, around and through each other--the economy amongst them is the psyche. This interaction which constitutes the individual psyche at any point in time is unlike that of any other. Simply, the Keatsian economy is unique. Because of the particularity of each psyche, Lacan warns that any theory (including his own) is only a schema abstracted from the multiplicity of its manifestations. Neither Keats's (poetic) autobiography, nor anyone else's, will fit at all points with theoretical formulations. However, as Marjorie Levinson remarks, Keats's "is a thoroughly objectified consciousness: a thing reviewing its thingness" (231). The object he reviews and the act of reviewing bear a striking

resemblance to the Lacanian theoretical subject and the process of psychoanalysis, respectively. What is remarkable is that in writing a myth/story about becoming a subject in a system of signification, whether Language in general, or poetic language in particular, Keats and Lacan engage with such similar concepts.

Lacan's individual relationship to psychoanalytic practice and discourse is also a good example for demonstrating Keats's relationship to poetry. Lacan is a subject in and of psychoanalysis. He practises it and writes it. His membership in the group is shaped by it. After all the trials of apprenticeship he speaks in an elite discourse--a psychoanalyst speaking psychoanalytic language. Lacan learned from and emulated Freud's discourse, but also appropriated it, turning it into a discourse of his own. It is in this sense that Keats takes on his subjectivity as a poet. From his position as a subject in and of everyday language, he apprentices himself to Poesy--an elite discourse.<sup>5</sup> Keats learns from and imitates his predecessors, but eventually appropriates their language and gives it something of his own.<sup>6</sup> Keats becomes a poet speaking poetry.

Becoming a psychoanalyst, or poet, or subject in and of language requires a trial of apprenticeship. Keats too must have his trial: "I must make 4000 Lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry" (Letters I,169-70). For Keats this was "a test, a trial of [his] Powers of

Imagination and chiefly of [his] invention" (Letters I,169). No longer would he merely fashion pastiches (Gittings 43) from the poetry of his masters; he would appropriate their language and give it something of his own. A test and trial indeed. Writing to Hessey, exactly one year later, Keats expands on the nature of the trial:

The Genius of Poetry...cannot be matured by law & precept...That which is creative must create itself--In Endymion, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice. (Letters I,374)

In the process of this experience, Keats leaves the comfort of the bower and takes on full subjectivity as a poet. In this letter, he equates "law and precept" with the security of the mere copyist's endeavour. Although Keats decidedly goes on to borrow from and emulate other poets, he appropriates the basis of their speaking and creates his own voice.<sup>7</sup> With Endymion Keats matures, through a trial in which the law and precepts of subjectivity--the Law, Name, and Language of the Father--shape the "imagination of a boy" into "the mature imagination of a man" (Endymion Preface).

With a more mature imagination, Keats is able to review the theoretical aspects and implications of what transpired with the writing of Endymion. In the letters after Endymion

he explores ideas about the imagination, the character and identity of the poet, and the place of hardship in human life. Negative Capability, the vale of soul-making, the Mansion of many apartments, and the identity (no identity) of the poet all demonstrate the laws of subjectivity: They all imply something which precedes, shapes, and is extrinsic to human and poetic consciousness. In a letter to George and Georgiana, Keats sets forth two metaphors regarding the shaping of the human soul: " 'The vale of soul-making' " and the world as school (Letters II,102-103). Taken together, the two elucidations of soul-making demonstrate the pattern of a process which resembles Lacan's thinking on the formation of psychic economy--especially the interaction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Although expanding upon the view of existence as a vale of tears, in doing so Keats also relates a process very much dependent on the construction of identity. He distinguishes the "Soul...from an Intelligence ...[found as] sparks of the divinity in millions" (Letters II,102). This distinction resonates easily with that between the human creature and the human subject. The bridge from one to the other, both structurally and chronologically, is identity: "they are not Souls till they acquire identities" (Letters II,103). "How then are Souls to be made?" (Letters II,103). "{A}toms of perception" (Letters II,103), without identity, interact with the human heart both in and with the world. The intelligence knows and sees; it perceives; it is God. This

divine spark is not unlike Lacan's Imaginary, encompassing as it does narcissistic and godlike identifications with images. The self in the Imaginary stage knows and sees its image, but does not yet have identity as a subject in and of language. The world is the "*elemental space*" (Letters II,103), the external ground, the Other, against which the intelligence and heart interact.

In this first attempt in the letter to explain soul-making, Keats does not describe the function or nature of the human heart. Based on the briefness of Keats's account of human development in the vale of soul-making, any resemblance with Lacan's formulations is speculative. However, Keats himself can "scarcely express" (Letters II,103) the growth of the soul here. He recasts the process in a new signifying chain, this time being more frankly metaphorical. Here, the emphasis is placed on language and an authoritative institution which functions to initiate the child into the linguistic system. The world is "a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read" (Letters II,103). The school-world is a powerful and purposeful Other preceding and extrinsic to the child, the preserve of the Law, Name and Language of the Father, human culture lying in wait for the child. The human heart Keats likens to a child's horn, or alphabet, book. It is precisely language, the curriculum of the Other. The hornbook, language, letter is the heart of the subject in and of signification. What emerges from the interaction of



intelligence, heart, and world is the "*child able to read*" (Letters II,103)--the soul replete with identity. Keats asks: "Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul?" (Letters II,103). From a Lacanian perspective, the question can be posed differently: Is it not, rather, only a schooled soul which can see the world as a place of pains and troubles? Or again: Is it not the desire of the Other which shapes a subject aware of that very Other and aware of its otherness to itself? Only the subject in and of language has the ability to reflect on its own self-awareness, its own pains, and its own mortality. In this consists the very identity of the soul. The world is, indeed, necessary.

"[P]erfectibility--the nature of the World will not admit of it--the inhabitants of the World will correspond to itself" (Letters II,102). Perfectibility implies the end of desire; and the end of desire is death. That extreme happiness, according to Keats, is not bearable. Death is not the point. Awareness of death, of mortality, is. Identity consists not in a life of tears, with the final reward and completion of death. Rather, it exists because man "is mortal and there is still a heaven with its stars above his head" (Letters II,102) and of that he is well aware. Self-awareness, then, is the key. Keats implies this in his discussion of a "rose...[with] sensation" (Letters II,102). In order to employ this metaphor in his discussion of the vale of soul-making, he must have a rose

capable of self-awareness: the rose "enjoys itself" (Letters II,102). Without the rose's ability to know its own enjoyment, the metaphor would not work.

John Barnard writes of Keats's "recurrent wish to lose the self in being" (52) and sees the expression of that wish in Keats's discussion of the rose:

This gives the basis for the characteristic tactile, visual and auditory effects in the poetry, and the preference for metaphors of fullness, of a selfhood bursting with its own identity. Sensation then is linked with Keatsian empathy. Being taken up into sensation, into something deeply other to the self, takes Keats a long way from simple sense experience ... the imaginative experience therefore started from direct experience, but its meaning went beyond mere day-dreaming. It was in fact a kind of thinking through images. (52)

Keats's "thinking through images," tied as it is to an imaginary identification of self which is other to itself, corresponds both with Lacan's ideas of the human self in the mirror stage, and with his ideas about how the Symbolic mediates those imaginary connections to create identity. Negative capability, being in uncertainties, empathic identification, and "no identity," all participate in the imaginary where the self is the phallus and thus the object of the other's desire.

The paradox, however, is that none of this is available directly for poetry, nor for thought. Were Keats to be, in actuality, in the Imaginary, he would be unable to articulate it. Were he not already alienated from "the unselfconscious joy of natural experience" (Ward 298), he would be unaware of his alienation. Only from "the self-awareness of human experience" (Ward 298) can Keats apprehend the contrast. The nightingale cannot admire its own full-throated ease. The phallic fullness of being in a life of sensation does not desire itself, cannot comprehend a lack which is only knowable in the life of thought. Yet Keats persists throughout his writing; he repeatedly posits that moment of almost mystical union--with a sparrow, with Lamia, with the nightingale, with Cynthia. In this, Keats is not unlike Lacan. Boothby, writing about Lacan's discussion of the *jouissance* evident in Bernini's St. Teresa, notes "the most enigmatic moment in Lacan's thought: the insistence on a union beyond the imaginable of flesh and word" (228). Keats also insists on this union. However, his poetry oscillates between attempts to be this very moment and acknowledgement that it is always beyond. Self-annulment in *jouissance* is the death of the articulate self. And while "a union beyond the ...flesh and word" may often be the subject of Keats's poetry, the word always mediates and insists on separation.

In the dynamic between "a selfhood bursting with its own identity" and an awareness that this would entail the

loss of the articulate self, a poetry of desire emerges. William Shullenberger, discussing Lacan's concept of desire, writes of its implications for poetry:

A primal totality is not conducive to poetry because it is not conducive to language; there is no need to signify if there is no absence. Language emerges as the condition and structure of our exile, and poetry...is a repetition-compulsion of this primal catastrophe....Yet repetition-compulsion involves a refusal to remember, a getting stuck at the threshold of trauma; this is particularly true of the occasion of poetry, because it cannot make present a time when language was not...if desire dreams of a passage into pure presence, the language which keeps desire alive also reminds it of its own impossibility of fulfillment. (35-36)

Shullenberger goes on to discuss Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as two remarkable instances of the dynamics of desire in poetry. In this he not only selects particular poems, but also inadvertently locates a point in Keats's poetic development where he had arrived at a greater awareness of the "impossibility of fulfillment."

Patricia Parker, Robert Kern, and Jack Stillinger all note a change in Keats's thinking which occurred "during the winter of 1817-18...particularly while copying out Endymion

for the printer" (Kern 68).<sup>9</sup> Parker writes: "Keat's [sic] poetry and letters after Endymion signal his intention to move beyond romance, in both directions [to tragedy and epic]" (108). Although each discusses the change as one in Keats's ideas about "Romance" (not inappropriate to Lacan's linguistic rendering of Freud's family romance), the most important consideration may well be the timing of this change in relation to Endymion.

Before Endymion, Keats seems to have had a much less problematic relationship with completion and fulfillment in his poetry. Desire appears to find satisfaction, the fullness of being unaware of the lack which inaugurates its quest. Shullenberger's sense of "desire dream[ing] of a passage into pure presence" resembles what Robert Kern describes as an "escapist gesture" (72). Using the "Epistle to George Felton Mathew" as one example, Kern describes how Keats

turns to 'some flowery spot'...from the actual and present to the imagined and remote....in imagination, at the heart of the romantic forest, a place free of contradictions where both erotic and poetic pleasures await him. (72)

This special place, "[t]he bower...central image of all Keats'[sic] early poems" (Dickstein 35), is a threshold which is not passed through--indeed a threshold which cannot be crossed. A movement to *jouissance*, to a union beyond the flesh and the word, would incorporate within it a movement

out of articulation. This can only occur through "the function of language" (Boothby 228), to a subject already in and of signification. To put it more simply, albeit reductively, one cannot come out of oneself before one has come into oneself.

In his early poetry, Keats had not yet negotiated the phase which would make him aware that "the condition of writing constitutes itself as exile" (Shullenberger 36). Desire only appears to be satisfied because it is not yet aware of itself as desire. In the bowers and nooks before Endymion, Keats can rest and write embraced by traditional motherly qualities. "We can mostly readily characterize the bower by borrowing the adjectives that Keats applies to Sleep at the beginning of 'Sleep and Poetry': gentle, soothing, tranquil, healthful, secret, serene, and full of visions...it is also overtly erotic" (Dickstein 36). Keats stops at a threshold-bower which functions as a mirror of the narcissistic and imagistic self. In this mirror, he sees reflected a poet who "is" the phallus, completion of the mother's desire. Poesy, in this period, is mother; her womb is lucid (Endymion I.786), as it is still in the beginning of Endymion. Keats can imagine himself "among the greatest" (Letters I,374) by seeing himself reflected and productive within her nurturing and erotic embrace.<sup>9</sup> In short, Keats's poetry is an attempt, until Endymion, to remain in the narcissistic Imaginary.

Although Keats's early poetry strikingly exhibits this tendency and just as strikingly shifts with Endymion, the letters do not demonstrate quite the same pattern. Generally, the letters before Endymion do not contain much detailed discussion about poets, their nature, and their relation to poetry. I would suggest that the difference is that between the enactment of the taking on of poetic subjectivity in the poetry, and the theorizing about it retrospectively in the letters. In particular, Keats's concerns with poetic identity and Negative Capability unfold, in the letters, in a way which indicates a mature awareness of, and an attempt to work through, a paradox. Geoffrey Hartman notes "the Keatsian paradox: lack of identity *characterizes* the poet" (x). In the pre-Endymion poetry, Keats pursues unity and coherent, if narcissistic, identity: it may be all but impossible to achieve; it may ultimately be better not to achieve it and to remain in uncertainties, but the possibility exists. Here, the Ego is what Hartman sees as Coleridgean: "imagination as a unifying as well as empathizing faculty" (ix). In his letters, Keats is more ambiguous: he shifts between implied affirmation and direct denial of identity.

The distinction I am making here between the poetry and the letters is not usual in psychoanalytic critical practice. Both Keats's poetry and his letters are language, the desire of the Other. And his writing about poetry and the poet overlap and inform his writing of poetry as a poet.

However, the letters and the poetry fall, respectively, into the realms of theory and praxis, or perhaps, word and deed. In this Keats displays a dual nature. As a theoretician, he is firmly in the Symbolic, a position from which he is much more likely to be ambiguous and aware of the uncertainties of identity. The early poetry longs for non-problematic and narcissistic identity, but cannot yet "see" in its longings the symbolization which is the source of its own making. Hartman, although commenting on Lacan, demonstrates a contradiction in Keats's poetry:

Speech, for Lacan, is not a cry of (biological) need but a cry of desire. Like the achieved literacy of artifacts, it stands beyond the pleasure principle; it is defined, therefore, by that 'Long Way Round to Nirvana' that also characterizes, in Freud, the workings-out of the death instinct. The Short Way is via the sphere of narcissistic images; but the symbolic or verbal sphere is where desire conducts its endless ballet. (xvii)

Until Endymion, Keats tries to make of his poetry "the sphere of narcissistic images." Only when he acknowledges the mediation of the Word in the poetry does it begin to negotiate the desire and absence of the long way round.

Being entirely in the Symbolic sphere, the letters deal exclusively with the "Long Way Round to Nirvana". Keats's



letter to Woodhouse perhaps best demonstrates the double move of the paradox noted by Hartman:

1st As to the poetical Character itself...it is not itself--it has no self--it is every thing and nothing--It has no character... A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity--he is continually in for--and filling, some other body--The Sun, the Moon, the Sea, and Men and Women who...have about them an unchangeable attribute....If then he has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would write no more? It is a wretched thing to confess; but is a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature--how can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with People...not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me that, I am in a very little time annihilated... (Letters I, 386-87)

With this formulation, Keats acknowledges the poetical character's "radical ex-centricity to itself" (Lacan, Écrits 171). He acknowledges the priority of language as the desire of the Other and its effects in forming the subject. And he admits the imaginary ego and its necessity "for the constitution of objects...fellow being[s]" (Lacan, Seminar II 244).

"What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth-- whether it existed before or not" (Letters I,184). Walter Jackson Bate writes that, for Keats, "the Imagination...is intuitive and immediate...it looks inward, grasping by an effort of sympathy and intuition the hidden intention and reality of life; and what it seizes, synthesizes, and creates" (Negative Capability 12) must be true. Bate and Lacan differ immeasurably. Where Bate sees the Keatsian Imagination looking inward, Lacan would see it taking shape from what is reflected back to it from without. Yet on certain points, they would agree. The Imagination, in the context of character and identity, is similar to Lacan's imaginary ego. It synthesizes. The reflected image functions to assemble the separate parts of the chaotic body into a perceptual whole. In another sense, the Imagination, or ego, is synthetic in that it is a perceptual construct. And it is true because it shapes us. As Lacan notes: "The fact that it is imaginary doesn't take anything away from it...If it weren't imaginary, we wouldn't be men, we would be moons" (Lacan, Seminar II 243). (An interesting juxtaposition when considering Keats's fascination with the moon, especially in Endymion.)

Lacan's "Schema L" (Appendix 1) illustrates the "verified reality" (Seminar II 244) of the synthesizing function of the Imagination and the nature of the unpoetical character which knows itself as other to itself and is

spoken from a place other than where it is. This diagram depicts the dynamics of human subjectivity which is

stretched over the four corners of the schema: namely,  $S$ , his ineffable, stupid existence,  $o$ , his objects,  $o^1$ , his ego, that is, that which is reflected of his form in his objects, and  $O$ , the locus from which the question of his existence may be presented to him. (Écrits 194)

The schema, as Lacan writes, "illustrate[s] the problems raised by the ego and the other, language and speech" (Seminar II 243).

The solid line between  $o$  and  $o^1$  is the axis of the Imaginary. It represents the developmental mirror stage in which the child sees an image of its wholeness which "is the source of all later identifications" (Wilden 160). This axis of the Imaginary also represents the continuing dynamic of the ego and the later identifications. As Lacan states: "the ego is an absolutely fundamental form for the constitution of objects...it perceives...its fellow being...in the form of the specular other" (Seminar II 244). This dynamic is narcissistic and "directly reciprocal in that it is a dual dialectic of activity and passivity. The subject may constitute the other as an object, he may be constituted as an object by the other, or he may constitute himself as an object in the eyes of the other" (Wilden 165). However, as Wilden notes, the system is a closed one (165):

It may well represent the "Short Way" round to Nirvana, but a Nirvana that can never know itself as such.

The only way out of this closed system is through "the mediation of the third term, the unconscious" (Wilden 165), or as Lacan calls it "the radical defile of the Word" (qtd. in Wilden 107)--the place of the Law, Name, and Language of the Father--the Other, the O of the schema. The "symbolic axis, O-S,...represents the coming-into-being of the subject through the agency of the Other in discourse" (Boothby 114). The "coming-into-being" results from the triangulation formed by the line O-o<sup>1</sup>. Through the threat of castration, dismemberment, death, the subject becomes one in and of signification which provides the language with which the ego-other axis is, and must be, articulated. Thus, the "locus from which the question of his existence may be presented to him."

Lacan employs Freud's formulation to present an encapsulated version of the schema: "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. I must come to the place where that was" (Écrits 171). He further asks: "Who, then, is this other to whom I am more attached than to myself, since, at the heart of my assent to my own identity, it is still he who agitates me?" (Écrits 172). Notwithstanding the fact that Keats claims no identity for the poet, this question is pertinent to his understanding of the poetical character. For his claim of non-identity follows the dynamics of Lacan's schema--a poetic coming-into-being--and follows the pattern of the

question above. Keats's denial of identity is paradoxical in that it carefully constructs poetic subjectivity (a precarious, but necessary identity). First, Keats creates an imago, a Gestalt, which reflects him back to himself (the axis o-o<sup>1</sup>). This Gestalt is clearly an object, any object: "some other Body--The Sun, the Moon, the Sea, and Men and Women who...have about them an unchangeable attribute" (Letters I,387). And Keats identifies with this image--the image of "the poetical Character... that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a Member" (Letters I,386). The idea of the poetical character as a Gestalt is further strengthened by Keats's use of the term "member." Lacan posits the Gestalt as an image by which the child gathers together the fragmented body--its members (Écrits 4-5). In claiming membership in a type, Keats's ego takes on objectivity and form. Although imaginary and paradoxical, non-identity becomes identity. Interestingly, Keats quite clearly sees this in relation to Wordsworth: It is "the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone" (Letters I,387). Keats's identity is also "a thing per se," but he cannot see it in relation to himself--"he sees himself in a {ego on the imaginary axis}, and that is why he has an ego. He may believe that this ego is him, everybody is at that stage, and there is no way of getting out of it" (Lacan, Seminar II 243). However, in Keats's assent to this paradoxical identity, he does indeed question who still agitates him.

"If he has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would write no more?" Although speaking literally about doing more writing, Keats with this question asks implicitly who indeed it is who writes. Where I am he who has no self, who speaks? Who speaks me? Where am I? I speak where I am not. And again: "...a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature--how can it, when I have no nature?" Keats's "no nature," his imaginary ego, is spoken by the Other (the axis O-o<sup>2</sup>). His ego-object-me is spoken by his linguistic-subject-I. They are not one. With this astute perception, Keats demonstrates his Negative Capability. He can be in uncertainties, must become uncertain ("the identity of every one in the room begins so to press upon me that, I am in a very little time annihilated"). The threat of annihilation, of castration and dis-memberment, ensures an "I" who speaks at all.

However, although astute in his speculations, Keats definitely writes, in the letters, from the position of the *cogito*. He uses "all the powers of the reflection...by which subject and consciousness are confounded" (Lacan, qtd. in Wilden 106). Although he raises questions about "I" and "me," he speaks from a position of implied certainty--he is an "I" which can be annihilated. In his poetry, "Keats is not...primarily a poet of ideas....[T]he ideas are not central in his best poems. They form a background to the poetry, a context in which the poems were written, but are

not themselves the explicit or implicit content of the poetry" (Stillinger, "Intro" xxii). Although this is true, I would suggest a somewhat modified explanation of the relationship between the ideas and the content of the poems. Keats's ideas are about the poetical character and the act of writing poetry. In the poems, the subjectivity, poet, is made, enacted. The content differs with each poem, but the characters and details of each replay some aspect of the psychic economy of the poet coming into being, either developmentally or simultaneously.

Stillinger posits a diagram (Appendix II) which "represent[s] the typical lyric poem of Keats's time as a literal or metaphorical excursion and return" ("Intro" xvi). As he describes it:

The horizontal line stands for a boundary separating the actual world (below) and the ideal (above)...Characteristically, the speaker in a Romantic lyric begins in the real world (A), takes off in mental flight to visit the ideal (B), and then-- for a variety of reasons...returns home to the real (A<sup>1</sup>). But he has not simply arrived back where he began....He has acquired something...from the experience of the flight, and...he is never the same afterward. ("Intro" xvii)

Stillinger's schema resembles an incomplete version of Lacan's; turned 90 degrees clockwise, it can be read as the simple existence of the subject in the real world (A); the

other (B), which forms the imaginary axis (B-A<sup>1</sup>) with the ego (A<sup>1</sup>). With the addition of the final leg of Lacan's Z shape (axis O-o', where o' corresponds to A<sup>1</sup>), a rationale exists to explain the "variety of reasons" for return and alteration. Without the function of the Other (language) in the psyche, the self would be in that closed and narcissistic system endlessly. There would be no change upon return and no possibility for its articulation. Also, Stillinger's ideal world (B) corresponds to the Lacanian Imaginary: It is a world of plenitude, completion, pure presence, and eternity, with the traveller as phallus.

Before Endymion, Keats's poetry seems to enact that dwelling in a world of plenitude, dwelling "in the bosom of a leafy world" ("Sleep and Poetry" 119). Where there is excursion and return, the voyager is perhaps altered, but never in a negative way. He comes and goes in a kind of infinite loop where he is soothed and refreshed, made whole: In Cynthia's realm, even "[t]he breezes were ethereal, and pure, / And crept through half closed lattices to cure / The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep, / And soothed them into slumbers full and deep" ("I stood tip-toe" 221-24). Those healed have "their tongues...loos'd in poesy" (235), a speaking which completes them and in which they become poesy's completion. The relation is one of "silken ties, that never may be broken" (238). There is not yet a "locus from which the question of his existence may be presented to him." No triangulation exists here, no threat



of castration. There is only reflection. Keats identifies with an image of himself speaking. Holding his pen for Poesy, he is the phallus.

In "Sleep and Poetry," Keats deals explicitly with his relation to Poesy. He plots the course of his poetic development: "so I may do the deed / That my own soul has to itself decreed" (97-98). However, the poem is also an accurate statement of Keats's current place in the process. Keats asks where he can position himself "[a]nd echo back the voice of [Poesy's] own tongue?" (52). The poet's speech in this stanza is all echo and copy. While Keats is indeed spoken by the other, he has not yet crossed "the radical defile of the Word." Nothing is problematic: Everything is clear, sweet, intoxicating, full of visions. The bower of completion and speech are conflated: "...a bowery nook / Will be elysium--an eternal book / Whence I may copy many a lovely saying" (63-65). From this position, Keats passes "the realm.../ Of Flora and old Pan" (101-02). In terms of his personal chronology, Keats and his poetry are currently in this realm. Stillinger argues that the position of this poem at the end of Keats's Poems in 1817 is "a justification of much of the verse in his first volume" ("Order of Poems" 11), as well as a plan for the future. The end of the first volume marks the end of Keats's progress through the sphere of narcissistic images.

However, while in the realm of "Flora and old Pan," both here and in the beginning of Endymion, the poet is in a

pre-subjective world of plenitude.<sup>10</sup> The focus is almost entirely on the body and the senses. The poet will "sleep" (102), "Feed" (103), kiss, "Play" (107), "bite" (108), and "rest" (112). Language is part of the scene, but has not yet been appropriated by the poet. He and his playmates will read "A lovely tale of human life" (110), but they themselves will not speak: they will rather "rest in silence" (120). The relation to Language here is in marked contrast to that in the vision of the charioteer. "A nobler life" (123), and "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (124-25) are linked to the charioteer. As we have seen, agonies and strife are only known to the self-conscious speaking being. Not surprisingly, the focus in this section is on speaking as well as listening: "The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks" (136). And Keats wishes not merely to listen to the charioteer and be silent, but to "know/ All that he writes with such a hurrying glow" (153-54).

Although his wish to know is not fulfilled at this time--"The visions all are fled" (155)--Keats does "keep alive / The thought of that same chariot, and the strange / Journey it went" (160-62). Later in the poem, he discusses the presumptuousness of his speaking (270-71) and its boyish, premature nature (273). Keats is very much aware in this passage of the danger involved in appropriating knowledge and speech:

Therefore should I  
Be but the essence of deformity,

A coward, did my very eye-lids wink  
 At speaking out what I have dared to think.  
 (297-300)

It may be "impossible" (311) to forego this test and trial, but for the time being Keats backs off from the "toil" (307) and "desperate turmoil" (308) of the endeavour. While he can see "An ocean dim.../ Spread awfully before [him]" (306-07), Keats is not yet ready to negotiate the rocks and quicksands of his trial of invention. He retreats to his position at the beginning of the poem, a position in which he is filled with another's words--" 'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow / Some precious book from out its snug retreat, / To cluster round it when we next shall meet" (324-25). The vision of the charioteer and his car is fled forward to Endymion.

When the sun's "chariot last / Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast" (Endymion I.552-53), Keats begins the trial that will move him away from identification with the image of fullness and completion. He appropriates the phallus as the signifier of presence as he moves from the Imaginary into the Symbolic. Endymion is both the act in which and locus from which the question of poetic existence is presented to Keats. After Endymion, Keats speaks, poetically, from a different position and in a different way. To reiterate, the change which occurs with this poem is noted by many critics. Kern, Parker, and Stillinger discuss the change in terms of romance. Additionally,

Stillinger cites Endymion as the first place where the structure of voyage to the ideal world and altered return appears ("Intro" xviii). More generally, the poem is seen as the bridge between the juvenilia and the mature poetry.

John Middleton Murry sees a major shift within Endymion. He likens the progress of Endymion to the movement through Keats's Mansion of many apartments. In the Mansion, Murry sees three phases: "the thoughtless delight of pure experience;...the delight of awakening thought; and...the pain and perplexity of fully awakened thought" (46). The phases of movement through the apartments correspond markedly with those through Lacan's Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic. In "the infant or thoughtless Chamber,...we remain as long as we do not think" (Letters I,280). In the Real, there is no language and no thought. The infant is purely itself, undifferentiated from its surroundings. Keats's description of "the Chamber of Maiden-Thought" (Letters I,281) is cast in the visual and imagistic terms which characterize the Lacanian Imaginary: "we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight" (Letters I,281). Although a chamber of plenitude, the self cannot remain in spite of the wish to do so. Significantly, the developing self is propelled into the third chamber through the authority of the father--"among the effects this breathing is father of..." (Letters I,281). Entry into this third chamber is

marked by darkness and awareness: "the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression" (Letters I,281). The "'burden of the Mystery'" (Letters I,281) is the awareness of death and the desire for an ultimate meaning underlying that mystery.

Interestingly, although he speaks of many, Keats only considers three apartments, the number necessary in Lacan for the triangularity which forms the subject. Notwithstanding the fact that Keats writes only about what he himself can perceive from the point of his own development, the dark passages of the third apartment and those beyond seem to be involved in the further exploration of misery as burden--desire in endless search of fulfillment. It is also significant that to a point, movement through the Mansion is not volitional, just as the development of the subject is not. From the first chamber to the second "we...are at length imperceptibly impelled" (Letters I,280-81). Between the second and third chambers, "many doors are set open" (Letters I,281). The individual is a passive recipient of this development. However, once subjectivity is thrust upon the individual--once thrust into the third chamber--the perception, at least, is that the efforts of the will prevail. Keats follows this pattern. From the third apartment and beyond, activity replaces passivity: "Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them" (Letters I,281). Considering that Keats uses this simile as one of human and poetic development, it is

telling that Murry links it as he does with Endymion. For Murry, the poem "is [one]...of maiden experience and maiden thought, indeed, but they are conscious of their doom"(46). If the poem is one of development of such magnitude, then something important is indeed happening in it.

Endymion: A Soul in Ferment

Keats's first "Endymion" poem is "I stood tip-toe." Like "Sleep and Poetry," it is conscious of necessary turmoil, but not conscious of doom. In both of these early poems, Keats retreats from the quicksands of invention. He ends "I stood tip-toe" abruptly: "...but now no more, / My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.--" (241-42). Both poems are also aware of only temporary respite from the ordeal. In "Sleep and Poetry," Keats will "be more calm awhile" (305). The dash at the end of "I stood tip-toe" implies both more soaring to come and a while to rest. Visionary soaring in each poem is intimately tied to the question of Keats's relation to poetry; and both poems deal with that question in a similar way.

Keats begins "I stood tip-toe" with the description of a natural world which is pleasant and refreshing, a place where he is "light-hearted" (25). The benefits of this world are the waking counterparts of the benefits of sleep--the benefits of the bower. But, as Poesy is beyond sleep, so is there a world of visionary nature beyond the everyday environment. "Were {Keats} in such a place" (93), he could pass from the world of Flora and old Pan, translating it into a poet's tale. In this he would emulate the charioteer of "Sleep and Poetry" and talk "with wond'rous gesture" (136), creating "Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear" (138). While the visionary realm of "I stood tip-toe"

fosters poets rather than charioteers, they function in the same way. Poets encounter either nature or an original act directly and talk with wondrous and poetic gesture about it. Keats is a supplicant here, much as he is in "Sleep and Poetry" when he asks what attitude and position he should adopt in order to "echo back the voice of [Poesy's] own tongue" (52). In "I stood tip-toe," he "must...praise" (123) the Moon, "Maker of sweet poets" (116); and as she "has made the sage or poet write" (125), perhaps she will make Keats write also.

In "I stood tip-toe," Keats is separate from Endymion and from the poets he discusses. However, in this poem he incorporates the necessary elements for the creation of his subjectivity in Endymion. All of the original tellers in "I stood tip-toe" tell of some aspect of love. In relating the birth of the four love stories, Keats connects the birth of poetic speech with gender, sexuality, prohibition, and narcissism. He further looks forward to Endymion by conflating poet and lover: "He was a Poet, sure a lover too" (193) who "gave meek Cynthia her Endymion" (204). With this poet-lover figure, Keats develops the base from which he can approach the Moon and create his own story of Endymion and of himself as a poet.

At the end of "I stood tip-toe," Keats asks: "Was there a Poet born?" (241). With this question he seems to look towards Endymion from two different, but related perspectives. In conjunction with the myth of Endymion and



Cynthia, Keats foreshadows a problem he will take up in Endymion: Was there ever a poet who could tell of the ecstasy of sexual fulfillment? Or is there an abyss which cannot be crossed, a saying "no to the phallic function" (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 143), a function without which the poet cannot speak? Second: Was Keats, the poet, born by the end of "I stood tip-toe"? In both cases, at least in Lacanian terms, the answer would be "No!" The "no" to the first question remains. However, in negotiating the quicksands, sexuality, and the threat of castration in Endymion, a poet is born. And born precisely because the threat of castration forces Endymion, and Keats, into the Symbolic. The poet-lover figure established in "I stood tip-toe" provides the necessary connection between the speaker and the phallus. In the poem, the third term enters to put the question of the speaking being's existence to the self, thereby creating a subject.

Endymion enacts a movement through the Real and the Imaginary into the Symbolic. In doing so, it foregrounds a dyadic relationship which is both maternal and erotic; it creates the category of woman as a being who stands at once in the place of completion and absence; it is myth as the Symbolic buttress of the fantasy of heterosexual unity; and it incorporates the prohibition of the Name, Law, and Language of the Father. In Endymion Keats appropriates the (poetic) phallus and inaugurates beyond it a poetics of desire.

With Endymion, Keats is both author and subject. Most "critics...seem to agree that Endymion is Keats" (Waldoff 34). As Eugene and Rosemary Green express it: "To speak of Endymion is, for Keats, to speak of himself" (18). Thus, as Endymion takes on his subjectivity, moving through the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic, so too does Keats take on a poetic subjectivity alongside, but parallel to it. Because of the manner in which this comes about, Keats seems to enact that creativity creating itself. However, as is implicit in his letters, an Other exists which is prior and facilitates the process. Keats himself is that Other. He prohibits Endymion's narcissistic, erotic, dyadic, and imaginary relation with Cynthia. With this act, he also ends his own similar relation with the maternal and erotic bowers of the earlier poems. In this way he can be said to father both Endymion as character and himself as poet. The making of a poet occurs both with the act of writing this poem and within it.

Endymion is fraught with the threat of castration and the necessity of foregoing the kind of sexual involvement which would be the end of the articulate being. As Lacan insists:

...short of castration, that is, short of something which says no to the phallic function, man has no chance of enjoying the body of the woman, in other words, of making love.

To make love, as the term indicates, is poetry.

Only there is a world between poetry and the act.  
 The act of love is the polymorphous perversion of  
 the male, in the case of the speaking being.

(Feminine Sexuality 143)

All the couplings in the poem, whether consummated or not, demonstrate prohibition, annihilation, or "polymorphous perversion of the male." Keats alludes to the myth of Pan and Syrinx: "Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth/ Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx..." (I.242-43). Although only an allusion, this story contains many of the elements which repeat throughout *Endymion*. A sexual relation between Pan and Syrinx is prohibited: "She envied, imitated / The virgin attitudes of Queen Diana" (Ovid 51). Syrinx metamorphoses into reeds which can be seen as a phallic substitute, especially when they become pipes; and which Pan appropriates to become "a kind of poet" (Dickstein 73). The Symbolic forestalls the act and enables speech. Likewise the Alpheus and Arethusa story is based on prohibition (II.959-60). Adonis is both temporarily annihilated and thoroughly feminized through his association with Venus (II.392-418). Glaucus is withered and impotent after his encounter with Circe (III.637-38). Although discussing "faery land," Lionel Trilling aptly describes sexual encounters in *Endymion*: "the scene of erotic pleasure...leads to devastation,...an erotic fulfillment which implies castration" ("Fate of Pleasure" 67).

Endymion has no dearth of examples warning against the sexual union he is searching for. But, he must negotiate the threat of castration and entry into full subjectivity for himself. For most of his story, Endymion is lost in *jouissance* and does not negotiate the Oedipal phase. Only when he decides to live as a hermit does he finally give up the image of himself as the phallic self of fullness and completion for his mother figures. Keats forces Endymion's entry into the Symbolic, in part, by changing the myth. In a letter to his sister, Keats retells the basic Endymion story with its usual ending: "such a beautiful Creature as the Moon was growing mad in Love with him...and at last could not refrain from carrying him away...while he was dreaming" (Letters I,154). Michael Drayton's shepherd sleeps for "thirty yeeres" (Endimion and Phoebe 987). The Endymion that Keats encountered in Lemprière's dictionary gave rise to "the proverb Endymionis somnum dormire, to express a long sleep" (223). Tooke's Endymion "lay condemn'd to an eternal Sleep" (243). Stephen Steinhoff describes the precursor to Keats's Endymion: he "sleeps (or dies) into immortal life" (1). Immortal death, dreaming, or sleep is a problem for a speaking being; an impossibility for a poet. The visions and imaginings of the dream state can only be set down while conscious and can only be set down through the mediation of the Word.

In Lacanian terms, the earlier Endymion, as an immortally unconscious being, cannot be the paradigm for the

poetic creator. Such an Endymion is, theoretically, unsuitable material for a young poet attempting appropriation of the Symbolic and poetic phallus. The Endymion of the old myth is either permanently in the Imaginary, and thus never comes to language and the inauguration of desire, or he is at the end of desire, come to completion with the final lifting of the burden when the ultimate answer to the mystery is found. Either alternative means a very unpoetic silence. To be human and consciously self-aware is to be a subject in and of language, a subject in and of desire. Thus, the existing story of Endymion must be changed. Steinhoff describes the difference: the poem is "a Romantic version of the 'fall' ...which...is epistemological--the 'fall' into self-consciousness or man's present subject-object relation with nature" (18). Keats, through a series of lessons, interjects Endymion into language. He brings him from a pre-articulate to a speaking state. However, Keats prevents his Endymion from attaining his transcendent goal; he prevents him from attaining the end of his desire, and in doing so, keeps the possibility alive for his own poetic articulation. In his version, Keats appropriates the myth and changes it considerably. He allows his Endymion to have Cynthia and retain consciousness. However, Keats does not simply alter the character of Endymion from an unconscious to a conscious one. He also changes Cynthia. In doing so, Keats reveals a necessity for the existence of a conscious speaking being

and, thus, the making of poetry. Endymion enacts, both in its version of the myth and in Keats's writing of it, the play of lack, desire and speech. And it does so, conspicuously, with and through the figure of Woman as the Other and the threat of castration which association with her implies.

When Endymion is allowed to have his Cynthia, he has a version of her in which the paradox of desire is made explicit. She is no longer only a fantasy signifier in which Endymion can complete himself and lose himself. Keats, through his manipulation of the myth, keeps Endymion recurrently conscious and available as the paradigmatic locus of poetry by giving him a paradoxical Cynthia--a Cynthia who contains the possibility for both transcendence and negation in her nature. With the blended figure of Cynthia and the Indian maiden, Keats creates that Lacanian Woman who is, as noted above, "complement and absolute Other, faithful lover and transcendent value, truth, poetry, and unconscious all at once" (Swann 84). As Jacqueline Rose points out, such a woman is "the place onto which lack is projected, and through which it is simultaneously disavowed" (48). Such tension is necessary, as it both initiates and sustains poetry--perhaps the highest manifestation of the speech of the Symbolic realm.

However, before Endymion achieves appropriation of the Symbolic phallus, he functions in a state in which he cannot be fully articulate without the aid of others (Apollo and

Keats). The reasons are related, but different. First, Endymion sexually desires his vision and cannot project the source of that desire from himself onto her. Until the Indian maiden comes along, an appropriate figure for such projection does not exist. Second, he is unable to project the source of lack onto Cynthia, because she is a transcendent being, the fantasy of completion. Endymion, in his fantasy of oneness with his vision, enacts the narcissistic and imagined identification with a mother image. He is in the Imaginary stage at the moment (albeit elongated) of progressing into the Symbolic. Into this fantasy of plenitude, Keats interjects the prohibition of the Law of the Father, creating Endymion as a fully conscious and speaking being in his own right. He does so by temporarily feminizing Endymion, a form of castration, and by keeping him mostly passive throughout. Only when Endymion makes the decision to become a hermit is he appropriately placed to become a full subject. Keats also demonstrates for Endymion the "self-destroying" effects of sexual liaison with Woman--the "polymorphous perversion of the male." Endymion begins, enamoured and incapacitated, in an erotic and maternal bower, and emerges with the power of the Word. But his "success depends on his ability to renounce, explicitly in the person of Glaucus, though implicitly throughout, Circean charm" (Steinhoff 29).

In the proem, Keats foreshadows and summarizes Endymion's journey. He will enter a fecund bower and emerge

with the poem. In this statement of poetic intent, Keats also must renounce Circean charms. Unlike *Endymion*, however, Keats presumes this renunciation. Keats begins *Endymion* where he must begin, with the assumption of the Symbolic phallus, the poetic act of speaking--speech possible only through a disavowal of sex difference and the dangers implicit in the sexuality of Woman. However, he simultaneously acknowledges its necessity. Keats writes that he will "smoothly steer / [his] little boat, for many quiet hours, / With streams that deepen freshly into bowers" (I.46-48). This poetic creating takes place in a world, a spring, "lush in juicy stalks" (I.46). And, as the endeavour begins in spring, it ripens into "Many and many a verse" (I.49) by summer when "bees / Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas" (I.51-2). The poem should be complete in Autumn, before the coming of the "wintry season, bare and hoary" (I.54). As Dickstein notes: "By beginning the poem in the spring and planning to work steadily through autumn, Keats hoped almost magically to approximate the creative potency and sureness of natural fruition" (5-6). Thus, the poet will create his speaking out of a bower (womb) and in the approximate time of human gestation, but without acknowledgement of the female. Here the poet must, by omission, say no to the female, in order that the female cannot say no to the phallic function.

In many ways, from the beginning to the end of the poem, Keats plays out the paradox of desire and its gendered



nature. He maintains the fantasy of the status of the phallus: he must do so in order to speak. Keats at once presumes and denies the separation of the sexes as the prerequisite for speech. However, through *Endymion*, and his quest for subjectivity, Keats reveals that very separation, again and again, as the basis from which he speaks. Keats demonstrates Lacan's position that a world exists between poetry and the act of love and that, in terms of the speaking subject, sex equals castration. Ironically, with the moves necessary to create his *Endymion*, Keats makes explicit the very things which he seeks to, and must, deny-- the gendered nature of the subject in the Symbolic, the threat of castration which is the guarantor of that subject, and the fraudulence of the phallus as prime signifier.

Keats can presume the possibility of his task through the patronage of Apollo, who enables both the poet and ultimately *Endymion* to speak. Apollo's entry into "the beautiful mythology of Greece" (*Endymion* Preface), at the end of the age of the Titans, provides the prior and external impetus which lends its authority to Keats. Apollo is the "Father of all verse" (*Hyperion* III.13) whom both Keats and *Endymion* must emulate. Although not explicit, Apollo's presence pervades the proem, as it does the rest of *Endymion*. The Apollo who "Die[s] into life" (III.130) in *Hyperion* is redundant in terms of the chronology of Keats's poetic development.<sup>11</sup> Apollo's priority is a prerequisite which is clearly represented in *Endymion*.

Endymion and his company "sat listening round Apollo's pipe, / When the great deity, for earth too ripe, / Let his divinity o'er-flowing die / In music, through the vales of Thessaly" (I.141-4). There is a double movement in this passage which both supports the priority of non-sexual artistic creation and acknowledges its source in the sexual. First, Apollo's traditional instrument is not the pipe, but the lyre--the pipe is traditionally Pan's. Here Apollo has appropriated the pipe (phallus) from the sexual realm into the Symbolic--a necessity in Lacanian terms--a necessity for speech. Only with speech can Pan's hymn be sung. Second, Apollo's creative abilities parallel and set the example for Keats as he negotiates his way into the bower from which the poem will be generated. Apollo's overflowing divinity is orgasmic in relation to the earth. However, the result of this overflowing is divorced from the earth's fecundity. Apollo, if we read the phrase in this way, is "too ripe" for the earth. His divinity must "die," in this case in the sense of orgasm, or poetry must die. Here again, the female must be ignored or the phallic function is negated.

With the beginning of the story of Endymion, Keats adds the necessary detail to the space between entering the bower and emerging with the Word. In the proem, he foreshortens the process. The balance of the poem enacts Endymion's entry into subjectivity. Endymion's story is "a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain" (Endymion

Preface). In the space between the boy's imagination and that of the mature man, Endymion's soul and Keats's poetic soul take on identity in a vale of soul-making.

Endymion's life began in "the thoughtless delight of pure experience" (Murry 46), the infant chamber that corresponds to the Lacanian Real. Pan's world is associated with the libidinal, with nature and with the body--an ineffable world of undifferentiated chaos. This world is blameless, both in its sweetness and naivete and in its sheer unrestrained power. In the forest of Latmos, Pan is a "Breather round our farms, / To keep off mildews, and all weather harms" and a "Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds, / That come a swooning over hollow grounds" (I.283-86). He is a protector of "A lamb strayed far" (I.69). But Pan is also a "satyr king" (I.278), with all the Dionysian connotations of intoxication, sexuality, and dismemberment. This world is, perhaps, too closely bound with the inarticulate and thoughtless to produce poetry and song. Indeed, we come upon Endymion in the midst of another bower, a place where "one could only see / Stems thronging all around between the swell / Of turf and slanting branches" (I.82-4). Although this bower is sacred to Pan, Endymion's troop, with Pan's priest, seems only able to sing Pan's praises because of the symbolic presence of Apollo. Pan's world cannot sing itself and must borrow, as Keats does, Apollo's abilities.

In Keats's story of Endymion, Apollo's presence in Pan's world parallels the presence of culture in the world of the child: both impel development into the Symbolic, and both stand as guarantor of a split self enmeshed in desire. With Endymion, a rift has appeared in Pan's world. Although existing in that realm, Endymion is set apart from it. He appears as a "self...already fallen into division" (Dickstein 53). Endymion is very much like an earthly Apollo. He is at the top of the hierarchy of his society and is, in relation to his followers, as gods are to mortals. He is in the appropriate position in the hierarchy to make the move into a higher and more advanced world. An overflowing of generous material bounty comes from Endymion to his people. He is too ripe for this world and must die into the life of the Word.

Additionally, Endymion is set apart by being more fully described than anyone else. He has a Gestalt, an image as the basis of identification. Endymion

did seem of great renown  
 Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,  
 Shewing like Ganymede to manhood grown;  
 And, for those simple times, his garments were  
 A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half bare,  
 Was hung a silver bugle, and between  
 His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.  
 (I.168-174)

Endymion is not only set apart here, he seems poised between two worlds or stages. He possesses all the traditional attributes of male prowess: He is renowned, successful, strong, courageous, and at the peak of physical development. Endymion can rule and hunt. He also looks forward, Apollo-like, in that he is associated with symbols of music and speech--the silver bugle and the phallic boar-spear, respectively. However, even with such a definitely gendered image, Endymion has not yet assumed full control of it. The taint of femininity hovers about him through his resemblance to Ganymede. Association with a catamite is not complimentary to traditional masculinity. Endymion's image is the source of identification for what he must, but has not yet, become.

In addition to his exceptional male characteristics and accouterments, other details indicate Endymion's separation. He is aloof, despondent, and not in control:

yet hourly had he striven  
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven  
His fainting recollections. (I.395-97)

But there were some who feelingly could scan  
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,  
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip  
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,  
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets cry,  
Of logs piled solemnly.--Ah, well-a-day,

Why should our young Endymion pine away!

(I.178-84)

In these descriptions, Endymion seems both impotent and feminine. He is pouting and pining--not an effective condition for a manly quest. Walter Bate sees the Endymion of Greek myth as a problem figure for the active nature of Keats's poetic quest. Endymion is "a passive and pallid character" (Bate, Keats 176). Keats's Endymion is not so very different, hardly a candidate for what Waldoff sees, at least in part, as the "quest for selfhood" (50). However, Endymion's passivity is a necessity. And "quest" is perhaps the wrong word to use for his journey into language. In Lacan's theory, we do not quest after selfhood; rather, it quests after us. In our relation to language, we are indeed passive: "Language does not arise from within the individual, it is always out there in the world outside, lying in wait for the neonate" (Mitchell 5). Endymion must be passive; he has not yet fully negotiated "the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks" (Letters I,374) of passage into the Symbolic.

Endymion does not leap "headlong into the sea," he is impelled into it. He is passive, feminized--effectively castrated--and wanders in "ardent listlessness" (I.825). For all his masculine trappings, Endymion cannot effectively act. He has had three dream encounters with his vision in her heavenly abode and languishes. He is, as Peona points out, unable to "mount / Into those regions" (I.746-47). To

this point, Cynthia is the one who has pursued. She appears at her own discretion. During Endymion's first dream of her, the moon appears only after Endymion realized that he "could not pursue" (I.589). Later, she appears "in the clear well" (I.896) quite unexpectedly, as Endymion "was just going" (I.893). Finally, and most emphatically, Cynthia comes to Endymion, in dream, only after he admits that he cannot "at...will...start / Into [her] arms" (II.695-6). In Endymion's initial encounter with the moon, he is the sleeping author of his own loss. He loses his vision in the midst of his dream and wonders: "Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me / In midst of all this heaven?" (I.672-3). Endymion was one "who might have tower'd in the van / Of all the congregated world" (I.817-18), but he has become impotent. He has not yet even attained the ability "to let occasion die" (I.822); it dies without his consent. Because of the repeated absence of his desired heaven, Endymion turns to a surrogate.

In his misery, Endymion is led by Peona to a nurturing and maternal bower, where Keats has him set forth the very basis of his problem. In the "fellowship with essence" (I.779) passage, Keats has Endymion formulate the problem of the double dilemma of desire; and he formulates it precisely around the paradox of the double fantasy nature of the female. However, Endymion is able to do this rather prematurely. He must function as a speaking subject before he has passed into the Symbolic. Endymion achieves this in

a manner not unlike Keats's entry into the bower with his boat or Apollo's self-creating divinity. However, Endymion, unlike Keats and Apollo, can only articulate with the more direct help of Peona as a mother figure; he does not yet possess the self-creating power of the phallus. In this he is like Keats in his earlier poetry: From within a maternal bower, he is more spoken than speaking.

Peona takes Endymion, in "A little shallop" (I.423), to a protected "bowery island" (I.428), where she persuades "A yielding up, a cradling on her care" (I.411). Through her maternal ministrations, Endymion is "calm'd to life again" (I.464). However, Peona by herself cannot give Endymion speech. Peona "took a lute" (I.491) and

some influence rare  
 Went, spiritual, through [her] hand;  
 For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd  
 The quick invisible strings, even though she saw  
 Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw  
 Before the deep intoxication. (I.497-502)

Although this unseen force causes Endymion to become unconscious, it serves to introduce the symbolic presence of Apollo. Eugene and Rosemary Green note the presence of Apollo: With Peona's lute playing it seems "as if her very fingers had the assistance of Apollo in helping to revive Endymion's spirits" (21). Peona seems only a conduit through which Apollo is present in the maternal bower, a conduit through which Endymion is lent the power of speech.



Additionally, just before he formulates the paradox of desire, "He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew" (I.766). This drop, in addition to the spiritual sustenance it provides, seems vaguely seminal in nature and unconnected with Peona.

Endymion's speech follows the double horn of the dilemma of desire. In the first part of this passage, Endymion speaks of the "fellowship with essence" (I.779), and makes of it the state from which art and seeming completion come. Newell Ford, contrary to most of the critics who preceded him (and many who come after), sees in Keats's choice of the word "essence," a "blending of the experiencer and the thing experienced" (1073) which is not transcendental. This blending can occur, and is desirable, whether it be with roses, music, friends or lovers (1073). The object in the blend is unimportant--oneness and empathy are important. In this, I think Ford is both right and wrong. In Lacanian terms (which, of course, were unavailable to Ford in 1947), the fellowship in the first part of this long speech is precisely with the transcendent signifiers of the Symbolic realm. Put in terms of Lacan's Schema L: "the ego..., the other, the fellow being, all these imaginary things are objects. [T]hey aren't homogeneous with moons...But they are indeed objects, because they are named as such within an organised system, that of the wall of language" (Seminar II 244). In this part of the passage, the emphasis is on the "wall of

language": stories, ditties, prophecies, songs: "...the airy stress / Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds, / And with a sympathetic touch unbinds / Eolian magic from their lucid wombs" (I.783-6). From this sexual sounding, but asexual impregnation, "Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave / Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot; / Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit, / Where long ago a giant battle was" (I.789-92). Poetry, song, and speech are here created from the realm of the Titans. Having left the bower of sister and mother, Apollo received "Knowledge enormous" (Hyperion III.113): knowledge comprised of, first and foremost, "Names" (III.114). They were created from an asexual womb by the self-creating Apollo--an immaculate conception of the poetic word. Here we see the quest of the endless signifying chain, the quest to name "desire, [which] is desire of nothing nameable" (Lacan, qtd. in Felman 144), and the simultaneous denial of the gender relations from which desire springs.

Ford is, however, correct to stress the importance of oneness, both in the symbolic and the sexual realms. Oneness is the impossible end of desire, the end which is unconsciousness and death. Endymion reveals the outcome of the end of desire: "that moment have we stept / Into a sort of oneness, and our state / Is like a floating spirit's" (I.795-7). Such completion is "self-destroying" (I.799). However, this oneness is not nearly so destructive as that achieved through love and, especially, sex. To find

completion in sex with Woman, is to fall back into the pre-articulate state. Such oneness equals castration and the impossibility for speech, for it would be a re-entry into the stage on which the phallic function feeds. Thus, in sex, "we are nurtured like a pelican brood" (I.815); that is, the Symbolic is fed on the blood of the Mother.

Endymion outlines the fate of those who succumb. And, in the fierceness of the imagery, he reveals the deep fear of symbolic castration:

That men, who might have tower'd in the van  
Of all the congregated world, to fan  
And winnow from the coming step of time  
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime  
Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,  
Have been content to let occasion die,  
Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.

(I.817-23)

Endymion speaks most ironically, when he says that he would "rather be struck dumb, / Than speak against this ardent listlessness" (I.824-5). He is ardently listless himself, and can only speak at all through the good, and loaned, graces of Apollo and a little premature finagling on Keats's part. Additionally, from his position as a speaking subject, Endymion can only know, with regards to love, that he does not know; his speech does not know from whence it comes: "Just so may love, although 'tis understood / The

mere commingling of passionate breath, / Produce more than  
our searching witnesseth: / What I know not..."(I.832-5).

Endymion does know that he cannot survive "A love  
immortal" (I.849) with a transcendental signifier. He could  
never "brood so long upon one luxury" (I.855). He has "A  
hope beyond the shadow of a dream" (I.857). However,  
Endymion's hope lies in his fantasy that he may achieve real  
sexual union with his vision. He has not learned the lesson  
of the paradox which he has just outlined. Endymion has a  
real hope, though. It lies in the way Keats constructs him,  
in the lessons Keats will teach him, and in Cynthia herself.

In his love for the moon, Keats seems unable to tarnish  
her "argent spheres" (I.595) with the taint of full  
sexuality. While he may, in "I stood tip-toe," weep "that  
such beauty should be desolate" (202), Keats can only allow  
her sexuality to manifest itself, with Endymion, in dream.  
Cynthia retains, must retain, her virginity: if she did not,  
she would not be what Endymion seeks and his possession of  
her would destroy her. Keats seems to ignore the dark side  
of his lovely moon. He glosses over what Walter Jackson  
Bate notes of her "obvious limitations as a symbol of the  
ideal" (Keats 176). Cynthia/ Dian/ Artemis/ Hecate/ Phoebe/  
Lucina is, in Endymion, much more the virginal figure of  
transcendence, a figure of completion. This side of her  
nature foregrounds the kind of completion which would be at  
the end of desire--total fellowship with the Symbolic.  
Although he already has available, in Cynthia, the opposite

figure of temptress and huntress, one who reigns over the dark, Keats does not use her as such. However, Cynthia's dark otherness echoes in her very name: it echoes in the places and conditions in which Endymion meets her, for he always encounters her both in sleep and lush, womb-like bowers. For Keats to be able to write the poem and create a place from which both Endymion and the poet can speak, he must assume the double-natured female and both deny and transcend her. As the poem progresses, the imaginary sexuality and oneness of the mother-woman develops incrementally, from Cynthia, in whom both exist impossibly, to the split and subsequently reunited figure of Phoebe/Indian maiden.

In his passive and Imaginary state, Endymion resembles a child before it fully takes on language. As Shoshana Felman writes: "The mother (or the *mother's image*) stands for the first object of the child's narcissistic attachment, ...inaugurating a type of mirroring relationship" (104). In this stage, the child is aware of its separateness from what mirrors it, but imagines also an identification. This imaginary identification allows the child to perceive a completeness of love for itself. The child believes that it is the sole object of the mother's desire. Endymion is in this Imaginary state with Cynthia; indeed, he refers to her as "that completed form of all completeness" (l.606). In narcissistic fashion, he believes that Cynthia's love for him could not be withdrawn of her accord: "...And, of thine

own will, / Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me..." (II.750-1). Endymion thinks that he is the sole object of the moon's love, as she is the sole object of his.

Steinhoff sees Cynthia as the "narcissistic reflection of [Endymion's] own melting desire" (35). In the light of the moon, Endymion seems to see a feminine reflection of himself, as he does when he sees the face of his goddess "Smiling in the clear well..." (I.896).<sup>12</sup>

The libido is implicit in the relation between the child and the mother, as is its belief in her sole desire for it. Endymion, obviously, desires Cynthia sexually and possesses her in dream. He has the object of his own reflection in an Imaginary state. It is not difficult to see Cynthia as a mirroring of Endymion. However, the moon, as a mother image, is more implied than explicit in the poem. As noted above, Lucina, goddess of childbirth, is one of Cynthia's other epithets. Thus, it is not surprising that Endymion always sees, or comes together with, his vision in some sort of bower. And, as with the first lush bower of the poem, the bowers of love are all ripe and womb-like with sensuous growth. The "jasmine bower" (II.670), where Endymion and Cynthia consummate their dream union, is "bestrown / With golden moss" (II.670-1) and "dewy luxury was in [Endymion's] eyes" (II.676). Here, Endymion's "every sense had grown / Ethereal for pleasure" (II.671-2). Helen Vendler, although she does not see it as a problem, notes a characteristic of Keats's poetry in general: "In every

Keatsian bower there is a rendezvous" (85). In Endymion, the connection of pleasure, sex, and the womb is a something which must be prohibited. The Law of the Father enters and splits this duality:

The father (or the *father's name*), as a symbol of the Law of incest prohibition, stands on the other hand for the first authoritative "no," the first social imperative of renunciation, inaugurating, through this castration of the child's original desire, both the necessity of repression and the process of symbolic substitution of objects of desire. (Felman 104)

Without "the imperative of renunciation," the subject would not be conscious in the human sense, would not have language.

Being in the Imaginary state, Endymion has not undergone his inscription into language. And, when he has his encounters with Cynthia, he is, as far as can be in a poem, inarticulate. In a sense, he still must answer "no!" to both aspects of that earlier question--"Was there a Poet born?" Although Endymion tells Peona of his first vision, he admits that he really cannot speak it: "...yet such a dream / That never tongue, although it overteem / With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring, / Could figure out and to conception bring / All I beheld and felt" (I.574-8). When Cynthia and Endymion have their most intense encounter, both Endymion and Keats have problems speaking. Keats, in

relating the moment, can only say that he cannot say: "These lovers did embrace, and we must weep / That there is no old power left to steep / A quill immortal in their joyous tears" (II.730-2). Endymion can at first speak only of Cynthia's absence and, finally, is overcome and cannot speak at all. He cannot articulate his goddess's presence, only her absence: "Ah, thou wilt steal / Away from me again, indeed, indeed- / Thou wilt be gone away..." (II.745-7). As Endymion begins to speak of Cynthia's present and sensuous qualities, he is unable to finish:

'Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,  
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties-  
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,  
The passion'-----...(II.758-61)

In these passages, Keats reveals the symbolic castration implicit in sexuality. Whether due to a pre-language state or to loss of already acquired language through sex with Woman--the source of lack--sex and articulation are a world apart.

Cynthia seems to know of the world which separates poetry and sex: "Yet, can I not to starry eminence / Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own / Myself to thee..." (II.777-9). Endymion cannot remain in the Imaginary stage; he cannot have sexual relations with the mother image, no matter how faint the echoes of the maternal surrounding Cynthia are. Put another way, Cynthia knows of the paradox of desire: without the prohibition against their union,



Endymion cannot become a conscious subject, a subject aware of her as the myth of Woman as completion. If their union were to be consummated in reality, her "crystalline dominion/ [would be] Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!" (II.793-4). Poetry and language would not exist. Cynthia, created by old hymns, whether as virgin goddess or dark temptress, would not exist. And Endymion, as a human subject, could not exist.

Old hymns, ditties, and names are the knowledge Apollo has--the knowledge which makes him of the Symbolic realm. Endymion does not yet have this knowledge. In all his imaginary dealings with his goddess, Endymion cannot name her. In his last encounter with her before she reappears as the composite of herself and the Indian maiden, Endymion can only say, " 'O known Unknown!' " (II.739). Although in the beginning of Book III Endymion knows the source of his longing, he addresses his love with an apostrophe which still does not fully name her: " 'What is there in thee, Moon!' " (III.142). In Endymion's inability to name his love and in her repeated absences, there is a parallel with Lacan's re-reading of Freud's description of his grandson's "Fort! Da!" ("Gone! Here!") game.<sup>13</sup> Lacan sees in this the "binary opposition of presence and absence" (Wilden 163). The absence of the object (goddess, mother, lover, and prime source of narcissistic image) functions on two levels:

At the psychological level the partial object conveys the lack which creates the desire for

unity from which the movement toward identification springs--since identification is itself dependent upon the discovery of *difference*. At the logical or epistemological level,...the 'lack of object' is the gap in the signifying chain which the subject seeks to fill at the level of the signifier.

(Wilden 163-64)

Endymion is on the threshold between "Fort" and "Da." His love is never really present (she comes to him only in dream or trance) and her absence is what fuels his search.

"Gone!" seems an apt description for Endymion's dealings with females throughout the poem. Both halves of the game form the symbolization, the wall of language, which creates the subject. "The signifier...[is] 'what represents the subject for another signifier' "(Lacan, qtd in Wilden 191). Until Endymion can finally name Phoebe, until she is "here" as signifier, he exists only along the imaginary axis and is not a subject of signification.

However, long before this happens, Endymion must in some way experience the threat of castration which will facilitate it. In Adonis's bower, Endymion sees the death and silence which result from sexual relations with the double Other. He also sees the power of the Word to establish relations within the Symbolic. Both the dead Adonis and his death chamber are described in overwhelmingly feminine terms. Adonis rests, castrated, in a very female

and fecund bower. Endymion finds his way into "A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high, / Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy" (II.389-90). Adonis's covering is "gold-tinted like the peach, / Or ripe October's faded marigolds" (II.396-7). "Sideway [Adonis's] face reposed / On one white arm, and tenderly unclosed, / By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth / To slumbery pout" (II.403-6).<sup>14</sup> Surrounding Adonis are "tendrils green" (II.410), "Convolvulus in streaked vases flush" (II.415), "And virgin's bower, trailing airily" (II.417). Adonis, naturally, is quite inarticulate in Persephone's realm and a "feather'd lyrist" (II.432) must "...let [Endymion] know / Of all these things around" (II.454-5). The connections between sex, death, the inarticulate and the feminine are unmistakable.

In the episode with Adonis and Venus, two things seem important for Endymion's interjection into language. First, he is being shown the beginning of the split which must occur in Woman to allow her to be the locus of the paradox of desire. Adonis spends the "clear summer" (II.502) with Venus, here a figure of life, transcendence and the world of speech. Disembodied voices announce the rising of Adonis: "'Once more sweet life begin!' " (II.506). The world of Venus, that of life and summer is radically separated from that of Persephone, the world of death. Although Persephone is not named, the split woman is beginning to appear. Steinhoff sees Venus as a "beneficent mother" (37) who keeps Adonis "as a passive prisoner of female experience or

matter" (37). He is protected in his sleep from "the degenerative phase of the natural cycle presided over by Circe" (37). Neither alternative seems conducive to male potency. Venus knows that Endymion cannot rise like Adonis. She seems to know what Cynthia will later tell him: without the prohibition which splits Woman, the creation of the human subject is impossible.

Second, Adonis's story is an important example for Endymion. Adonis is like Endymion in that a "goddess pin'd" (II.458) for him. Unlike Endymion, though, Adonis "was content to let her amorous plea / Faint through his careless arms" (II.462-3). Adonis, with this refusal, is already in the Symbolic state. His incestuous desire is projected onto a split object. Additionally, Adonis's rises with a strong example of masculinity close by. Love, extremely phallic in description, attends:

awfully he stands;  
 A sovereign quell is in his waving hands;  
 No sight can bear the lightning of his bow;  
 His quiver is mysterious, none can know  
 What themselves think of it; from forth his eyes  
 There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes:  
 A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who  
 Look full upon it feel anon the blue  
 Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.  
 (II.536-44)

Although Love is unconnected here with the ability to make poetry, he seems to possess some sort of extra-creative ability. There is something seminal about the liquid which runs from his eyes into the souls of those who look at him. Adonis, however, in order to rise each year, needs more than Love's example. Jove "decreed he should be rear'd / Each summer time to life" (II.477-8). Just as Keats creates poetry from a pregnant bower and Apollo lets his divinity overflow the earth's fecundity, Jove, with "immortal tear-drops" (II.476), raises Adonis from the womb of death. Only with the power of the Word can he be resurrected. Through these males, Endymion is being shown an important lesson about desire and the split Woman on which Symbolic creativity rests.

With Glaucus, Endymion is given a more explicit lesson. Indeed, he even participates in Symbolic creativity, in much the same way as Keats, Apollo and Jove do. Glaucus is very much like Endymion in Pan's inarticulate world. In his world, Glaucus "touch'd no lute...sang not, trod no measures" (III.338). He desired Scylla and his "passion grew / The more, the more [he] saw her dainty hue / Gleam delicately through the azure clear" (III.407-9). However, just as Endymion's passion is misplaced, so is Glaucus's, for Scylla is a "Timid thing" (III.403), a figure of sweetness and completion and disavowal of lack. She rises from her long sleep, "blushing sweetly from her dream" (III.809) and displays "meek surprise" (III.810). Scylla is

very much like the transcendent aspect of Cynthia. However, Keats gives a greater awareness to Glaucus than to Endymion. Glaucus, unable to have Scylla, and suffering from agony "too fierce...to bear" (III.410), turns for "some relief" (III.412) to Circe. However, when Glaucus encounters her, Circe seems all sweetness: "With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove / A net whose thralldom was more bliss than all / The range of flower'd Elysium" (III.426-28).

With Circe, Keats gives us the horrifying side of Woman which involves symbolic castration. While fully awake, Glaucus seeks her sexually and is entranced. Thus, through the trance induced by the witch, Glaucus is able to project his own sexual desires onto her. When he awakes from her spell, Glaucus gives an account of Circe's world which is striking in the extremity of its depiction of the abject:<sup>15</sup> "there 'gan to boom / A sound of moan, an agony of sound" (III.484-5). Glaucus comes upon his former queen "Seated upon an uptorn forest root" (III.499), surrounded by "wizard and brute, / Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpentine, / Shewing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting! / O such deformities!" (III.500-3). Circe "took a branch of mistletoe, / And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial" (III.514-5). The images of the abject are almost too numerous to relate and involve everything from the strangulation of speech to deformities and poison. Here Circe is surrounded by mostly male symbols which have been grossly perverted.

In her curse, Circe, another knowing female, sums up Glaucus's problem, which is the very problem of the paradox of desire and the double Woman:

'Ha! Ha! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse  
 Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,  
 To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee: yes,  
 I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch:  
 My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.  
 So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies  
 Unheard of yet; and it shall still its cries  
 Upon some breast more lily-feminine'. (III.570-  
 78)

With the curse, Circe dooms Glaucus to a death-sleep at the end of desire. And, as would be expected, he suffers symbolic impotence and castration. For example, Circe says: "Thou shalt not go the way of aged men; /But live and wither, cripple and still breathe /Ten hundred years" (III.596-8). Glaucus describes himself: "...soon these limbs became / Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame" (III.637-38). With Endymion's arrival, Glaucus begins to take on a more masculine stance: he will "no more...wither, droop, and pine" (III.254), but will "mount upon the snortings of a whale" (III.246) and "madly sweep / On forked lightning" (III.247-8).

Glaucus's curse is mitigated in the only way it can be--with the intervention of the Symbolic, with words. He finds a scroll from a sunken ship, and it foretells

Endymion's arrival and the way in which the curse may be lifted. The prophecy is italicized in the text, definitely set apart as a poem within a poem. Endymion must "consummate" (III.710) this mitigation of the curse and when he does so, he seems to enact again that immaculate conception; this time not of words, but with words. With the pieces of the torn scroll, Glaucus instructs Endymion: " 'Youth! now strew / These minced leaves on me, and passing through / Those files of dead, scatter the same around, / And thou wilt see the issue' " (III.768-71). Endymion obeys. First, he "scatter'd in [Glaucus's] face some fragments light" (III.774), then proceeded to the rows of dead lovers, "Showering those powerful fragments on the dead. / And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head, / As doth a flower at Apollo's touch. / Death felt it to his inwards..."(III.784-87). Endymion is being shown his own interjection into language. The words of the old prophecy have created Endymion as a being in Glaucus's world. From outside and long ago, language created him as its subject. When Glaucus tears the scroll, he is enacting the splitting apart of a human subject through language. He rips apart the fabric of the real--the material scroll--but the Symbolic continues by virtue of Endymion's making it so. Additionally, with his action, his consummation of, and with, the Symbolic, Endymion relegates Circe and her horror to the unconscious. Not surprisingly, all of the newly enlivened company proceed to Neptune's palace, where they



celebrate the coming of the Symbolic with more words. They sing a hymn.

When Endymion awakes from his swoon in Neptune's palace, he encounters, in the form of the Indian maiden, his last lesson. So far, he has been able to formulate the paradox of desire for Peona, but not grasp its meaning. He has seen the effects of sexual liaisons on the speaking subject. Indeed, he has himself become inarticulate in the midst of such embraces. Endymion has been shown the paradox and necessity of the double Woman. And, he has seen examples of other male characters in different stages of and relation to the Symbolic. With the Indian maiden, Endymion learns about desire in the real world and while fully awake. He must "renounce...[her] Circean charm" before his interjection into language can be completed.

The Indian maiden is a living breathing woman. She is a sexual woman who wants a physical relationship. Endymion comes upon the maiden in a "thorny-green entanglement" (IV.41); not for her the lush and nurturing bower. The maiden's sexuality is explicit in her wishing:

No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet  
 That I may worship them? No eyelids meet  
 To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies  
 Before me, till from these enslaving eyes  
 Redemption sparkles!--I am sad and lost.

(IV.47-51)

However, this speech also serves to set up the maiden as an Ideal Other. In the tradition of courtly Romance, the maiden outlines the position of the lover in relation to the beloved. The lover becomes his lady's slave. Yet, as Karen Swann notes, such positioning

realizes a familiar plot whose main character is the Ideal Woman and whose dynamics are a happily asymmetrical reciprocity: [the lover's] active capture of the...lady brings about her passive, reflective response of "love" together with its domestic signs--meals, sexual favors, lullabies.

(84)

With this play of the sexual and the ideal, Keats depicts a woman who is Cynthia's opposite. Cynthia is the ideal, with a tinge of the dark and castrating sexual mother clouding her brilliance. The Indian maiden is the sexual and castrating woman who seemingly offers a hint of loving reciprocity.

Although a much milder figure, the Indian maiden is not unlike Circe. Her self-destructive sexual allurements are, at least partially, hidden by the lure of fantasy completion. However, unlike Circe, the maiden's enticements are, and must be, more explicit. Were the Indian maiden a woman whose destroying power was completely obscured with "tears, and smiles, and honey-words" (III.426), as Circe's are, she would, in effect, become another Cynthia, just as Circe becomes another Scylla. And like Glaucus, Endymion

would become just another myth, rather than a paradigm for the creator of myth. Endymion, however, must overcome his desire for the Indian maiden before he can take up this position.

The maiden wishes to negate the Symbolic, the place of conscious self-awareness to which Endymion must come. Unlike his desire to join with the transcendent, the maiden's longing is "for Hermes' wand, / To touch [a] flower into human shape!" (IV.66-7). She wishes "That woodland Hyacinthus could escape / From his green prison" (IV.68-9). The maiden can only achieve this negation of myth through sex, the castrating power of Woman. And she knows the power of love:

"There is no lightning, no authentic dew  
But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,  
Melodious howsoever, can confound  
The heavens and the earth in one to such a death  
As doth the voice of love" (IV.78-82)

Endymion is in trouble, and "...he groan'd, as one by beauty slain" (IV.98). Throughout his encounter with the maiden, Endymion is, perhaps prematurely, aware of the death and negation involved in association with her: "Thou art my executioner" (IV.111); "How dying I shall kiss that lily hand" (IV.118); "those tears have given me a thirst / To meet oblivion" (IV.123-4).

Endymion vacillates between his desire for the Indian maiden and his desire for Cynthia. He is clearly being made

aware of the death involved in sexual relations with the maiden. He must also be made aware of the negation which would follow union with the transcendent Cynthia. Additionally, Endymion must experience the prohibition of his sexual desire for his goddess. He will not be allowed her as she is. On "two steeds jet-black" (IV.343), Endymion and the Indian maiden are taken to the realm of myth, where Endymion finds that he can neither know his goddess, nor speak. He "blows a bugle" (IV.420), but is unaware, much to the surprise of his mythical hosts, whose it is:

'Whose is this?

Whose bugle?' he inquires: they smile--'O Dis!

Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know

Its mistress' lips? Not thou?--'Tis Dian's: lo!

She rises crescented!' (IV.426-30)

In a dream within dream, Endymion awakes from his enquiries to find himself perplexed by his inability to speak and know in the transcendent realm: "O state perplexing!" (IV.439); "...He who died / For soaring too audacious in the sun, / Where that same treacherous wax began to run, / Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion" (IV.441-4).

In "swift flight" (IV.496) with the maiden, Endymion finds that he cannot have either half of his split Woman, but also finds that he cannot come to full consciousness without something of her as the very basis for it. In the presence of Cynthia, Endymion sees the maiden's

body fading gaunt and spare  
 In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her  
 wrist;  
 It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd,  
 And, horror! kiss'd his own--he was alone.

(IV.507-10)

Endymion descends directly to the "Cave of Quietude" (IV.548), "where silence dreariest / Is most articulate" (IV.539-40). Although the cave is described as a "happy spirit-home" (IV.543), in it Endymion seems barely conscious. Here, Endymion "knew not whither he was going" (IV.551); "no charm / Could lift [his] head" (IV.556-7). Endymion seems in danger of becoming a figure of unspeaking immortality, forever frozen while visions and voices swirl around him: "...from an urn, / Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught" (IV.534-35). Endymion must undergo one more trial or become a silent and cold pastoral.

When he returns to earth, Endymion realizes he cannot have his Cynthia: "The hour may come / When we shall meet in pure elysium. / On earth I may not love thee" (IV.657-9). He seeks to return, with the Indian maiden, to a simple life in Pan's "forest wildernesses" (IV.636). With this decision, Endymion will fall back into the sexual and pre-articulate world. He pledges his love to the maiden and, in doing so, takes on the traditional feminine role. The "asymmetrical reciprocity," noted by Swann, is perverted. Endymion, rather than the Indian maiden, offers the

"domestic signs" of entrapment and negation. He offers meals: "Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring" (IV.682). He offers music: "Pipes I will fashion of the syrinx flag" (IV.686). He offers sex: "one human kiss!" (IV.664). Endymion's earlier words to the maiden well express his current state: "I / Have no self-passion or identity" (IV.476-7). The Indian maiden rejects Endymion to save herself from the "trammels of perverse deliciousness" (IV.761). Her rejection also initiates the process of saving him from the fate of non-identity. She knows of the dangers of such a love: "I may not be thy love: I am forbidden--/ Indeed I am--thwarted, affrighted, chidden, / By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath" (IV.752-4); "We might die; / We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought! / Enlarge not to my hunger..." (IV.758-60). The maiden's words, with their sexual punning, exactly convey the fate awaiting the Symbolic phallus in any sexual liaison with the body of the woman. And Endymion has not yet come fully into the Symbolic. The Indian maiden has no name. Her presence is forbidden, and Endymion has no signifier with which to cover over and articulate her absence.

Endymion is at an impasse. He cannot have Cynthia. He cannot have the Indian maiden. Death and silence lie in wait at the end of desire with either aspect of the paradoxical Woman. With Cynthia, Endymion cannot merge with the transcendent and have her remain so. He desires sex with a signifier for the absent mother; were he to have her,

she would no longer be absent and the act would be incestuous. Only with, and because of, his renunciation of Cynthia, can Endymion become a conscious speaking subject. The Indian maiden poses the opposite problem. Union with her, as the place of lack, the absence of signification, involves the impossibility of the status of the phallus and, hence, no identity, no consciousness. Endymion must renounce her as well.

Keats rescues Endymion from the edge of the abyss. He states that he will save Endymion: "Thy lute voic'd brother will I sing ere long, / And thou shalt aid--hast thou not aided me?" (IV.774-5). Although stopping just short of actual dialogue with his character, Keats seems to enter the story with this drama-like aside. With poetry Keats will bring Endymion into the Symbolic in a way similar to Endymion's entry into Glaucus's affairs. Keats's assistance is most important. It creates for Endymion the situation in which he can renounce the Indian maiden, thereby inaugurating "the repression and...process of symbolic substitution of objects of desire" (Felman 104). Endymion decides to be "A hermit young,...[and] live in mossy cave" (IV.860). From his isolation, he will undergo his own dying into life:

'Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord  
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,  
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses;  
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is

That I should die with it (IV.937-41)

'By Titan's foe

I am but rightly served.' (IV.943-44)

However, Endymion is not served in the punitive way he expects. By renouncing both of his loves, he observes the prohibition of the Law of the Father, and dies into the Symbolic.

Once Endymion has renounced both the Indian maiden and Cynthia, he has prepared the way, with Keats's assistance, for what he really needs. In his earthly sexual woman, Endymion "beheld / Phoebe, his passion" (IV.986-7). He has taken on the split and paradoxical double Woman, a necessity for his entry into the Symbolic. Endymion's paradoxical female tells him that a change was necessary in him: "from this mortal state / Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change / Be spiritualiz'd" (IV. 991-3). And, while she is right, the change must also be in her; and in her it has been. Endymion, through a philosophical lesson, through examples of the necessary paradox of Woman, through examples of different males and their relationships with this paradox, has been able to achieve and retain full subjectivity. He is not the Endymion of the old Greek myth who has unconscious immortality. Keats's Endymion is, at the very least, an apprentice poet. He begins inarticulate, belonging to the sexual world of Pan, and ends up in a



position from which he can speak. Endymion has, in his "Cynthesized" version of the Indian maiden, a Keatsian and Lacanian Woman--one onto whom lack is projected and one who simultaneously disavows that lack. Endymion has moved from the Real, through the Imaginary, to the Symbolic.

The poem ends abruptly just as Endymion reaches that state; but, having reached it, he could go on to bigger and better things. Keats, after this apprentice poem does carry on to write what are considered better and more mature poems. Out of the quicksands, Keats enacts the necessity for the creation of himself as a poet, and for the creation of poetry itself. He does so through the paradoxical figure of Woman as the Other. Thus, the "amorous ardours" (Murry 47), the "nympholeptic dream...[and] diction...sweet, luscious, trivial, and vulgar" (Finney 321-2), which offend so many critics, are not incidental to the poem. The threat of castration, sex, Woman, and the ultimate creativity of the Word may not constitute the entire meaning of Endymion, but they are foregrounded as the basis of its making--the basis for the existence of the conscious speaking being. Unlike more mature poets, the apprentice Keats has not covered the foundation of his ability to speak. He has, rather, laid bare that on which it rests through a trial which has burnt away the illusion of plenitude and presence. Not long after finishing Endymion, Keats announces the lasting effects of his test in "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again:"

When through the old oak forest I am gone,  
Let me not wander in a barren dream:  
But, when I am consumed in the fire,  
Give me new phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

(11-14)

The narcissistic and imaginary relationship of completion is barren, impossible, and annihilating. Out of its consuming fire the self rises as subject, dying into life in the Symbolic--dying into desire.

### Conclusion: A "Little" Change in the Intellect

In a letter to his brothers, the same letter which contains the Lear sonnet, Keats announced: "I think a little change has taken place in my intellect lately" (Letters I,214). The change demonstrated in the sonnet is one of which Keats is certainly aware. Considering the shift in the post-Endymion poems, Keats's declaration is understatement indeed. Perhaps at this time, so soon after Endymion, the depth of the change had not become as fully apparent as it would when his writing progressed. However, a profound difference is proven on the pulses of Keats's subsequent poems.

Keats's "little" change can be approached from many perspectives, but that in the nature of Woman and the bowers associated with her is most marked and obvious. Keatsian bowers are no longer lush, juicy, generative, and soothing. From the luxury of Madeline's chamber to the "elfin grot" (29) of La Belle Dame, enclosures have a cave-like and oppressive feeling and are removed from the green, natural world. No longer are the maternal and erotic combined in imaginary visions. Keatsian women after Endymion clearly display one or the other side of Woman's dual-nature. Lamia and La Belle Dame are erotic and deadly. They function in the place of lack outside the Symbolic. Psyche, Madeline, and Moneta function within the "kingdom of culture." They disavow lack.

La Belle Dame seems to promise love, sex, and completion. But she entices the knight into a bower tainted with the supernatural. Where the earlier enticing bowers turned out to be impossible in reality, La Belle Dame's other-worldly cave is both impossible and ominous. The knight emerges from the "elfin grot" diminished, pallid, and impotent: he takes no action and is only "palely loitering" (46). Death seems imminent when his paleness is echoed repeatedly in the kings, princes, and warriors: "death pale were they all" (38). The knight's speech also seems diminished. As Karen Swann points out, the knight "simply recounts a series of events... [which]...he gathers...into the last stanza, which, in the form of an answer, merely seizes on and hollowly repeats the terms of the interlocutor's original question" (81). La Belle Dame and her grot seem part of an evil and erotic charm which entices away the life of the subject.

Lamia also promises erotic and endless plenitude, but delivers death. She has two equally stifling bowers, both of which are all illusion, conjured up with supernatural forces. The bedchamber is enthralling and set apart from the natural world and the life of everyday humanity. The "summer heaven, blue and clear" (21) is distinctly removed from the room "Betwixt two marble shafts" (22). Although visible, the clear light of the heavens is beyond a barrier which proves in the end to be impenetrable. The sounds of life also seep in from the outside, but unlike the light of

the sky, the sounds entice Lycius to enter the mundane world. The results are disastrous. In trying literally to marry Lamia, Lysius tries to join the Symbolic world with the very absence and lack that is its foundation. He offends against the law of subjectivity--let no man join what subjectivity has rent asunder. When Apollonius cries out "Lamia!" she is finally named within the Symbolic and appropriately vanishes--her naming guarantees her absence.<sup>16</sup>

Madeline's chamber is like Lamia's banquet hall. Although man-made, unassisted by anything supernatural, Madeline's room is equally opulent and oppressive. The beauty and detail of the apartment hint at a darkness and secrecy which have unpleasant, even predatory, overtones. The menacing ambience builds through the suggestiveness of "knot," "device," "stains," "dyes," "tiger," "twilight," "dim," and "blood" (210-16). Even "carven" (209) seems to slide easily into "craven" which suggests both the cowardly nature of Porphyro's "stratagem" (139) and the resulting deflowering of Madeline (to be vanquished, to burst, to break). The description of the bedchamber focuses on the window and its shielding function. The light of the natural world does not enter here as it does into Lamia's bedroom. The "wintry moon" (217) is only present in the "warm gules on Madeline's fair breast" (218). The difference between the direct presence of natural light and its refracted, altered shadow is telling.

With Lamia, Lycius is an imprisoned subject, separated from the everyday world, but aware of and beckoned by it. Madeline is a virginal object, shielded, protected, and dictated to by Symbolic relations. In spite of the loss of her virginity and the highly erotic nature of her encounter with Porphyro, Madeline retains her capacity to disavow lack. If circumstances had transpired according to Madeline's plan, she would have awakened intact. Sexual thoughts and dreams may push at the boundaries of propriety, but do not break them. If Porphyro is a "villainous seducer" ("Hoodwinking" 82), as Stillinger suggests, then Madeline is innocent of any offence against sexual dictates. Although she has neither remained intact, nor been given in marriage, Madeline is not the subject of her own sexuality. She does not give her virginity; it is taken without her consent. For all her erotic activity, Madeline is not the wrong sort of woman.

Psyche, too, cannot be allowed to be the wrong sort of woman. In the "Ode to Psyche" the poet first encounters her as she was in "I stood tip-toe"--erotic and outside the realm of Symbolic relations. In the ode, Psyche and Cupid are set in a bower exactly like those of the earlier poems. The "bedded grass" (15), "beneath the whispering roof / Of leaves and trembled blossoms" (10-11), is erotic, generative, and nurturing. However, this imaginary vision is untenable. Psyche must be set apart, shielded, and made chaste. And in the ode she is carefully rehabilitated and

placed on the proper side of female dual-nature. Keats can only be Psyche's "choir," "voice," and "priest" (44, 46, 50) by removing her from the lush and erotic and by removing the lush and erotic from her. Keats achieves this by internalizing her bower and substantially altering its nature. As with other post-Endymion coverts, the "fane / In some untrodden region of [the poet's] mind" (50-51), replaces the generative with the Symbolic. Psyche becomes a goddess, set in a "rosy sanctuary" (59) within the fane, protected by her priest. Her physical and amorous pleasures are replaced with "all soft delight / That shadowy thought can win" (64-65). Unlike Madeline's, Psyche's "casement [is] ope at night" (66), rather than shut and trellised against the light. However, she is equally protected, for her casement opens not to the natural and green world, but onto a bower of thoughts within the poet's brain. Love may be welcome, possibly even erotic love, but only as it is filtered through the Symbolic of "shadowy thought." With Psyche secure in the Symbolic realm, Keats can "see, and sing, by [his] own eyes inspired" (43): he can be the full subject of his own poetic discourse, rather than just imagining second-hand what "felt he, who first told, how Psyche went" ("I stood tip-toe" 141).

Of all Keats's later female figures, Moneta is perhaps the most important. She exists beyond personal and particular involvement with one mortal male and is the bridge between the first, generative and fertile nature, and

the second or Symbolic one. Moneta stands as epic guarantor of the primacy of language and the split in the human subject. Her divinity, her ancient lineage, and her carefully constructed femininity make Moneta the ideal Symbolic Mother. Moneta's bower, like the other late bowers, is not leafy, green, and juicy. It is accessed through such a place by a "full draught" (46) which causes its loss: "the fair trees were gone, / The mossy mound and arbour were no more" (59-60). In the place of the green world, the poet finds "an old sanctuary" (62) with definite man-made features. Although older than anything seen on earth, the bower's architecture resembles "grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers" (67). It is an "eternal domed monument" (71) to the Symbolic. Not surprisingly, the first evidence of a living presence is language. From the inner sanctum of the curtained altar "Language pronounc'd" (107).

The language issues from a "veiled shadow" (141), a "Holy Power" (136), a being whose sex is undeterminable from its words. However, Keats repeatedly marks, must mark, this figure as female. Not only does he address her as "High Prophetess" (145), he also specifically notes her "accent feminine, so courteous" (215) (a seemingly inapplicable description in view of her actions and speech so far). Keats further develops Moneta by linking her with the maternal: "As near as an immortal's sphered words / Could to a mother's soften" (249-50); "I ached to see what things the



hollow brain / Behind enwombed" (276-77). But he is careful not to let her be actually fertile: Apollo is her "dear foster child" (286). All of this is necessary because Moneta is otherwise the most non-sexual of all Keats's females. He stresses this as much as he asserts her gender. Moneta is "veil'd in drooping white" (194); "in drooping linens veil'd" (216); her "thin folds of gauze...drooping hung" (218). When any part of Moneta's anatomy is mentioned, it seems devoid of warm sensual flesh: She has "broad marble knees" (214); "cold lips" (280); her face is deathly pale and "bright blanch'd" (257). Moneta is the ultimate non-sexual Mother, beyond even the virginal but fertile Mother of Christ. Moneta is "supreme / Sole priestess of [Saturn's] desolation" (226-27). She is the priestess of loss, "earthly loss" (441) of the world of Flora and old Pan. But Moneta covers over what is beyond and "Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe" (II.9): "I humanize my sayings to thine ear, / Making comparisons of earthly things" (II.2-3). She uses metonymy, making a word to word connection between the "barren noise" (II.5) of the language of the wind and human words; and she uses metaphor to carry on the story. Moneta is the pure Mother of the subject in and of signification. She gives the poet human understanding in the only way possible, through the Word.

The little change in Keats's intellect, the change in Keatsian women and Keatsian bowers is the story of the mediation of the Word. The apprentice Keats pursued Poesy

as an erotic and maternal plenitude which was directly equivalent with nature, truth, beauty, the visionary imagination, and the heart's affections. If he could but attune himself to her voice and resonate in sympathy, he would be a poet. If he could but enter her "lucid womb" and emerge with their joint progeny, he would be among the greats. With Endymion, Keats sought to do just that; he would steer his little boat into a fecund bower and there invent not only the poem, but himself as poet. However, during this trial of invention, Keats confronted himself with the taboo against the conjunction of the erotic and maternal, with the threat of castration, and with the awareness that only the Word can create subjectivity. He confronted himself with the Name, Law, and Language of the Father, with "language by which the poet's merely human consciousness tries to write itself into existence" (Shullenberger 36). After Endymion, Keats's ideas about the female place in creativity change and with that his relationship to poetic creativity also changes.

In November 1817, with Endymion nearly completed, Keats wrote: "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream--he awoke and found it truth" (Letters I,185). Here the male has become the "womb" from whence the female issues. He is lucid and generative from the insemination by God, the Logos, the Word. As with Apollo's presence in the world of Pan, as with Endymion's use of the Word to resurrect Glaucus, as with Keats's direct involvement in Endymion's

circumstances, the Symbolic always precedes. Logos, the Word is present and shapes identity. And, whether its presence and power is direct and explicit, or only implicit, it is the force behind the truth of the Imagination--the only way identity can be formed and the only way to comprehend and express anything.

At the end, in The Fall of Hyperion, Keats gives the Word its place:

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.6-11)

Here, Keats seems to resolve or decide the struggle between a life of sensations and one of thought. Only through the mediation of words--the Symbolic--can the imagination, with its imaginary identifications and narcissistic involvement be saved from an unselfconscious (dumb) existence.

Endymion, in moving from the Imaginary into the Symbolic, enacts a necessary development for Keats. Each leaves behind the realm of Flora and old Pan; each is forced to give up his imagined identification as the phallus--the object of Cynthia's or Poesy's desire--and each takes up poetic subjectivity. From this position Keats can write his poems of desire, aware of the gap which separates him from the unselfconscious and full-throated ease of the nightingale.

1. Whether psychoanalytic discourse is prescriptive or descriptive of patriarchy is a question beyond the scope of this thesis. Feminist critics, myself included, have considered this question in some detail. Jacqueline Rose in her "Introduction II" to Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne (1982), offers an insightful account of the implications of Lacan's thinking for the female subject, as does Kaja Silverman in The Subject of Semiotics (1983). My own position is that any such discourse is both prescriptive and descriptive, but also that prescriptiveness does not preclude a useful descriptive approach. I have chosen here not to engage with the larger issues of women's position within the system of culture.

2. Robert Gittings, John Keats (1968), 25-7; Aileen Ward, John Keats: The Making of a Poet (1963), 10.

3. I am making a distinction here between the identity, poet, as a designation of vocation and Keats's ideas about the "poetical Character" having "no Identity." They are, however, intimately related and a full discussion follows.

4. See the "Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud" in Écrits: A Selection (1977) for Lacan's reformulation of Saussure--i.e. his moving away from the sign as the prime differential term and his privileging of the signifier over the signified.

5. The point is not whether we now think of poetry as an elite discourse, but that the Romantics did. The point is also not about the failure or success, or lastingness, of any poets or their poetry.

6. Harold Bloom in Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens (1976) deals with this and other concerns of this thesis in a related but different way. For Bloom the "primal fixation or repression...[is] the Scene of Instruction, a six-phased scene that strong poems must will to overcome, by repressing their own freedom into the patterns of a revisionary misinterpretation" (26-27). While the six stages are discernible in Keats's development, they seem to be as much a struggle with a *Langue* that is poetry itself than with the individual *parole* of any nameable precursor.

7. In a letter of Feb. 27, 1818 to Taylor, Keats states an axiom for poetry: "That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all" (Letters I, 65). Although this claim for spontaneity seems to contradict Keats's earlier claim of a test and trial, it comes three months after the completion of Endymion and supports the idea that something crucial happens in that

poem. Becoming a subject in language is a trial, according to Lacan, but once done we do speak seemingly spontaneously.

8. Glen O. Allen also addresses the change in "The Fall of Endymion: A Study in Keats's Intellectual Growth," Keats-Shelley Journal, VI (1957), 37-57.

9. Wordsworth especially is one of those greats and he too seems always to see himself as the phallus, the completion of nature's desire--a union from which he emerges with his poetry. That is not to say that the erotic is present as it is in Keats's work, only that in positioning the shaping poetic spirit, chronologically, in infancy, Wordsworth retroactively circumvents and suppresses the shaping power of a cultural Other--Nature, not culture, is Teacher. This is partly what Keats seems to object to when he accuses Wordsworth of the egotistical sublime.

10. The chronology of Keats's change in intellect and that of Endymion's change are possibly identical. Robert Gittings in John Keats (1968), 147-160, suggests a marked change in Keats's thinking by the end of September 1817, during his stay with Bailey in Oxford. This timing corresponds to that of the completion of the third Book of Endymion. It is in the final Book where Endymion takes on his full subjectivity (discussion to follow).

11. In The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems (1971), Stillinger asks: "What was there left to do in Hyperion?" (50). Although addressing other of Keats's concerns, this question is exactly to the point. The mechanics of the dying into life of the articulate being were laid bare in Endymion; and the trial of self-invention done. The re-mystification of the process in "a fore-seeing God" (Letters I, 207) is unconvincing.

12. Cynthia's reflection in the water is not unlike Eve's "within the wat'ry gleam" (Paradise Lost IV.461). Endymion's "sympathy and love" (PL IV.465) for the image he sees is equally a "vain desire" (PL IV.466).

13. Freud observed his grandson playing with "a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it...What he did was to hold the reel by the string and...throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive 'o-o-o-o'. He then pulled the reel out...and hailed its appearance with a joyful 'da' ['there']. This, then, was the complete game--disappearance and return." Beyond the Pleasure Principle. 1920. Standard Edition 18.15, 1955.

14. Christopher Ricks, in Keats and Embarrassment (1974) 12-13, sees Adonis's sleeping as the source of embarrassment.

While he presents an interesting argument, it seems that the feminization of Adonis would be an even more embarrassing phenomenon to view.

15. See Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982). I am using the abject here in two ways. First, for its "one quality of the object--that of being opposed to I" (1): Also "as to the ordeal...that abjection can constitute for someone who, in what is termed knowledge of castration,...presents himself with his own body and ego as the most precious of non-objects; they are no longer seen in their own right but forfeited, abject" (5).

16. Although Lycius calls her by name before Apollonius's outburst, this seems an oversight on Keats's part. Lycius expressly asked her name, and she never did tell him.

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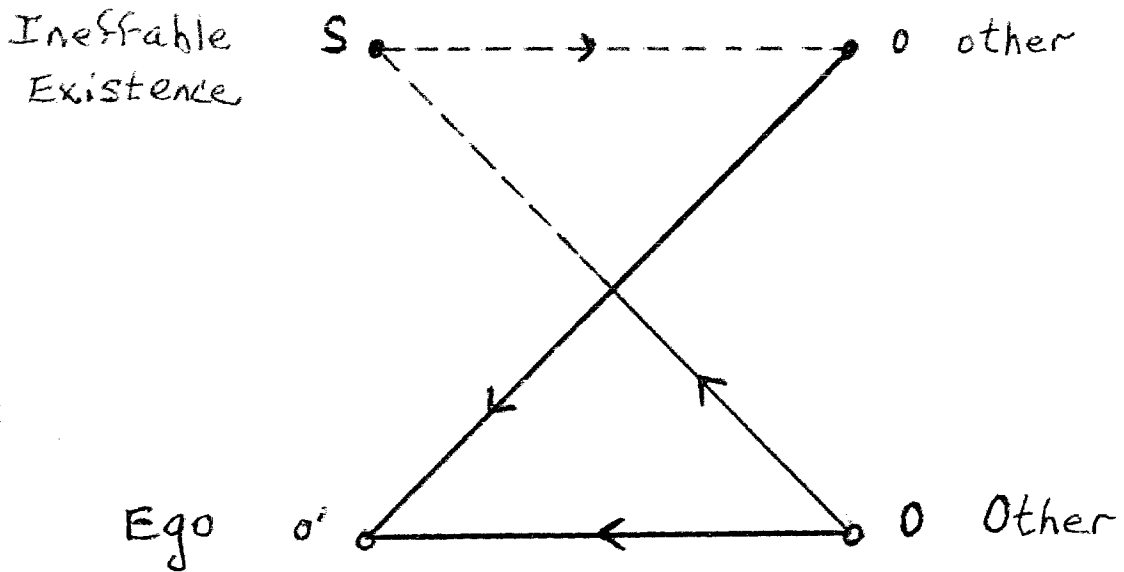
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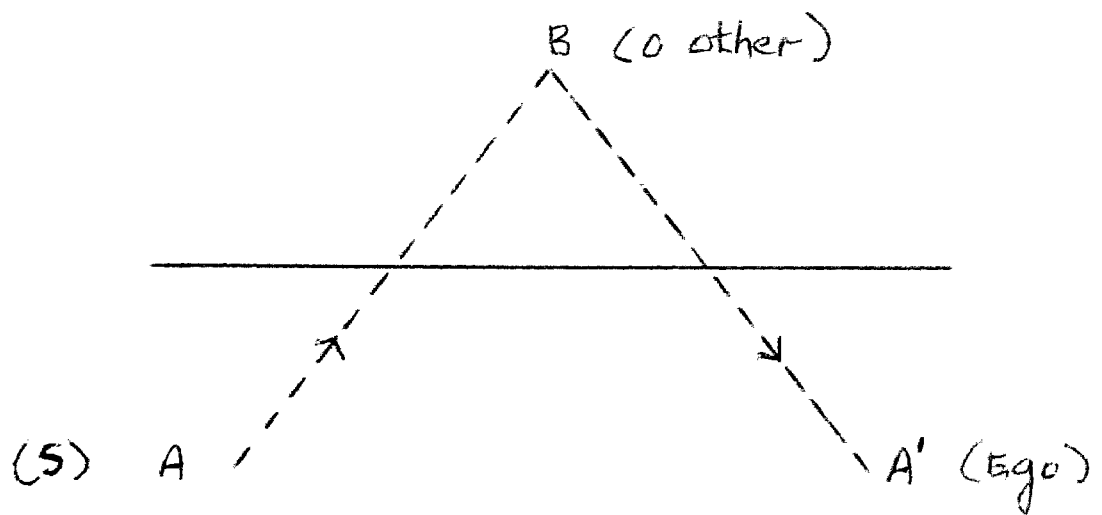


## Appendix I



Lacan's Schema L varies in its detail as his thinking develops. I have used a modified, and somewhat simplified, version here. For discussions of the schema see Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book II, 235-47; Ecrits: A Selection, 192-99; Boothby, Death and Desire, 114-20; and Wilden, in Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis, 106-8.

## Appendix II



Stillinger's "basic Keatsian structure," in the Introduction to John Keats: Complete Poems, xvi. I have added details from Lacan's Schema L to facilitate comparison.