

“Heard Melodies are sweet, but those unheard are Keatsean”: Linguistic Blind Spots in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

By Showvik Narayan Hore*

John Keats's famous Ode, although well-received by the critical fraternity at large, continues to baffle many, as it anxiously unites the ekphrastic with the epigrammatic, the unheard with the overheard, and most controversially, beauty with truth, towards its end. The blind spot, created through an inapparent harmony is, I argue, the result of a misreading of Keatsean ideology in general. Ode on a Grecian Urn is the product of an intellectual and ideological entanglement with the philosophers of the German Enlightenment, especially Friedrich Schlegel, whose On the Study of Greek Poetry (originally published in 1797) remains the most prominent influence of Germanic Hellenization on Keats. Furthermore, the Ode must not be read as an allusive perpetuation of aforementioned influences, but a conscious departure from it, vis-à-vis allusion and the false consciousness of reality birthed within the linguistic perfection of epigrammatic utterances in the poem. This is complicated by the manifold references to psycho-physiological exhaustion across the poem whose origins, I emphasize, are to be comprehended linguistically, for Keats carefully resists third-order ideology through punctuated lines and their subsequent parentheses, where Keatsean counter-argument exists in-between ideologically approved, rhetorical exuberance and pauses that should ideally symbolize an inside-out reading, or reading the text backwards. Particular emphasis is laid on the second and fifth stanzas of the Ode, and the connotative implications of words like “goal”, “cloyed” and “wilt”. Through close-reading and textual analysis, I further argue how Keatsean resistance often exposes the written lie without uttering the textual truth. By way of a conclusion, I shall present the different adaptations of an apparent dialectic harmony between “beauty” and “truth” amongst the Victorians, early and late, but also how the transcendental illusion of dialectic harmony, in essence, is the mutual contradiction of an antinomian sublime, fabricated to indulge in the false consciousness of Germanic Hellenization while re-textualizing itself palimpsestically in an analytic reading.

Keywords: Greek Poetry; Keats; Grecian Urn; Germanic Hellenization; Ideology

Introduction: Whose Ode?

Consider the last three lines from the first verse-stanza of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

What men or Gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes or timbrels? What wild ecstasy? (Blunden 2000, p. 258).

*Guest Lecturer, The Sanskrit College and University, India.

The six questions, constructed, and patterned as rhetorical strategies, must, from its inception, be read as "Whose men?", or "Whose Gods?", since the possessive pronoun at the beginning of the stanza camouflages actuality, creating an interrogative hierarchy, where question precedes question, where "Whose?" precedes "What?"; Is Keats rhetoricizing the Urn's possession of its inscribed characters? Is he inwardly triumphant that the Urn's failure in distinguishing the human from the divine authorizes re-positioning the possessive from its inscriber to the author – the re-writing of/on an inscribed/dis-possessing paradox, a situation where questioning the question becomes an anteriorly-adjusted rhetorical strategy, answering the question by deferring it? Is the "mad pursuit", possessed by the male characters, directed towards the "maidens", in the implied hierarchy of the conscious pursuit of will over the feminine lack of it? Is it embedded in the poet's quest when alleging that the pursuit underlies a meaning beyond the ekphrastic inscription itself? Are the "pipes", possessed by "men or gods", a minimalization, an unconscious abstraction in "pursuit" of phallogocentric authority, an unwilling, feminine desire ("loth") which, when fulfilled, elevates the poet from maidenhood to manhood, singularity amounting to rites, as well as rights of possession? The Greek Urn, when incapable of identifying its own who's who, succumbs in its pluralizing project, harking the question back to the singularity of its origin, whose erroneous replication enforces the strategy involving questioning the question: "Whose Urn?" Partial dispossession creates agitation, witnessed in the dismissive use of "these", but it leads to an important strategic question: if, by dispossessing plurality ("men", "Gods", "maidens", etc.), one retreats into a re-identification, and re-definition of its source singularity, would a Grecian Urn, after all questions are asked and answered, still remain Greek?

The anxiety of this immense conflict reflects in Keats when he confesses to the *agon* of his body and soul, disguised by the harmless (hence objective) use of "struggle", leading one to simultaneously ask whose struggle it is, and what struggle could, at the same time, expose and disguise the anteriority of an already unanswerable question. Its un-answerability, (doubling down on it), is a descent into the primal ("mad pursuit", "wild ecstasy") unconscious, where an already agonizing question further agonizes by aggravating the un-answerability of an even more primal question, deferring the (assumed) innate amalgamation between Greece, Greekness and the Urn as a stable repertoire of factually reliable history.

What I have argued, this far, in the introductory paragraph, has a twofold answer: first, the Whose-ness of Keats's "what" is original, only if simulated representations are perfectly original when simulated to perfection. Keats is, from the beginning of the Ode, enacting the linguistic blind spot between what Friedrich Schlegel, in *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (1797) calls the "authority of the ancients" (238:29) and the modern poet whose "entire life is a constant life-and-death *struggle* with the awesome power from whose arms he can never flee" (96M:24, emphasis in original). The "awesome power" in question here is that of the Grecian Urn, its characters in pursuit of a realization, the Odic form, Keats's "mad pursuit", and its residual *agon* in trying to fit within the definitional limits of the modern Schlegelian poet. The need to "flee", simulated in the Ode's "escape", introduces the readers to the Germanic Hellenization that Keats encounters and

attempts to transcend, discursively, in the poem. The specificity of the question responds to, and improves upon Martin Aske's contention in *Keats and Hellenism*, where he argues how the Urn "represents not a pageant or legend but rather unidentifiable fragments of a vision, amounting to so many intractable refusals to speak and to define" (112). Secondly, if Keats can (like the characters on the Urn who never escape the ekphrastic imposition of Greek art), never escape the *agon* between the linguistic underpinnings of Germanic Hellenization vis-à-vis Schlegel's text on one hand, and the restrictive visionary threshold of the modern poet, the Ode can, theoretically speaking, *only* accomplish a delicate subversion of the authority of the ancients, realizing the linguistic beyond the written letter, an allusion which negates traditional allusiveness through its linguistic act of self-identification with another text, acting within the liminal space between the unlettered word and the parergonic punctuation¹. This deferential enactment amongst words, meanings and epistemological import had already been a staple in Keats's letters: On 27th April, 1818, he writes to John Hamilton Reynolds about how he

Shall learn Greek...if you understand Greek, and would read me passages, now and then, explaining their meaning, it would be, from its mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing one's self (Gittings 1977, pp. 89–90).

Keats delicately subverts the (goals of the) Greek language, or the linguistic knowledge of the Greek language from Hellenic intuition, *willing* to subvert without relinquishing the Schlegelian "authority of the ancients" when transmitted to the hearer through the reader's self, an auto-translation, deferring one's own participation, despite its possibility – opening up, as it seems, a fertile crevice which he can visualize, from the corner of his eye – a linguistic blind spot that is creatively exploitable in his Ode. This Hellenization without Greece is that liminal space, the "greater luxury" that Keats insists upon in his implied indolence in "shall learn" – a fulfilment aesthetically fulfilled, therefore remaining an epistemological sore to the eye. This is further enacted in his convoluted letter to the George Keatses between 17th and 27th September, 1819 where he says how

I shall set myself to get complete in Latin and there my learning must stop. I do not think of venturing upon Greek. I would not go even so far if I were not persuaded of the power the knowledge of any language gives one. The fact is I like to be acquainted with foreign languages. It is besides a nice way of filling up intervals & c. (Gittings 1977, p. 325).

These "intervals" in Keats's Ode that he expected to "fill", I argue, should be our analytic tool that separates fact from act, Schlegelian Philhellenism from the Keatsean anxiety of the former's textual influence, and antinomian reality from dialectic illusions. This Greekness without Greece, acquaintance without friendship, and allusiveness without submission to authority is indispensable to the Ode's

¹"The *parergon* inscribes something extra, exterior to the specific field, but whose transcendent exteriority touches, plays with, brushes, rubs, or presses against the limit internally only insofar as the inside is missing. Missing something and is itself missing." (21) See "The Parergon" by Jacques Derrida and Craig Owens, published in *October*, Vol. 9 (1979): 3-41.

meaning. By way of this short review, I propose three methods through which this paper shall proceed:

- a) First, I shall determine the extent and depth of Keats's allusiveness from relevant texts authored by German Enlightenment thinkers, with special emphasis on Schlegel, but with lengthy references from F.W.J. Schelling and Immanuel Kant. I strive to argue, through close-reading, how Keats's representation of, or indebtedness to Germanic Hellenization is a resistive act when one reads in-between the lines, and how this resistance exposes the false consciousness behind any ideological structure, the most important one, in this case, being the revival of Hellenism and a revolution that would ultimately overthrow the Ottoman empire, casting the ideological shadow of a restorative Greece, inexistent except in art.
- b) This resistive act, despite its subversiveness, reinforces the Romantic tropes of canonical gender hierarchy – sublimity, masculinity and the apocalyptic above beauty, femininity and the harmonious. This line of argument maintains its continuity from the Neo-Platonic treatises on Beauty, which Keats upholds in his Ode². Resistivity has its psycho-physiological consequences when one observes how Keats *agonizes* himself through crucial phases in the verse stanzas, and the aftermath of linguistic attrition between the Classical and the Modern, in Schlegelian terms.
- c) The epigrammatic significance, or lack thereof, of sections from the second and fifth stanzas, followed by the allusive range covered by the juxtaposition of the words "beauty" and "truth", arguing how every author, except Keats, has emphasized the impossibility of beauty being or becoming truth, forcing the conjunction "and" to enact deferment instead of harmony. This is followed by how Keats's resistive act uses "is" to write "is not" palimpsestically, across the text, exposing its antinomian stature, and not its apparent dialectic limitations.

Unhearing Melodies: Keats Contra Schlegel

Consider the entire second stanza from *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

²"How come to vision of the inaccessible Beauty [read Sublime] dwelling as if in consecrated precincts, apart from the common ways where all may see...Let us then flee to the beloved Fatherland...There whence we have come, and There is the Father" (53-54). See *The Enneads* by Plotinus, translated by Stephen MacKenna and abridged with an introduction and notes by John Dillon for Penguin Books, 1991.

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;³
 Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal – yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! (ll. 11-20, p. 258).

The first two lines allude to a crucial passage from Schlegel's *Study* where he remarks how

Every sound of a living being has its own peculiar meaning; moreover, the similarity of many sounds is not without meaning...a people could genuinely take great pleasure in the similarity of sounds...rhyme will always be a strange disruption...for only the uniform similarity of the twofold quantity of successive sounds can express the universal (*SGP*, 27:235).

First and foremost, the “unheard” in Keats’s melody is, even by conservative estimates, an extension of the hear-ability of the heard, since it can both be articulated, and compared as superior to “Heard melodies”. The “peculiar meaning” in Schlegel’s prose is epigrammatically represented in that antithetical juxtaposition of the “heard” and the “unheard”, but the “unheard”, if it had to remain profoundly unheard, must elude articulation; it must not remain inaccessible. Secondly, the “pipes” in the first stanza have gone flaccid in the second (“soft pipes”), making Keats “play on” humorously with the (peculiar) harmony between the “heard” and the “unheard”, limp phallogocentrism represented by a juxtaposition of allusive proximity. Interestingly, one can observe the deconstructive strategies in Keatsean poetics, implemented here. The Ode’s superficial allusion must be connoted as insufficient for critical purposes; endearment, created as the quantitative succession of sounds (“sweet” and “sweeter”), refers back to the Schlegelian notion of Universality, here construed as an un-ruptured reality, an end represented by disengagement of the ear, textualizing the truly unheard. This is equally peculiar, since the ghosted “pipe”, now played to the spirit without authoring ditties (Latin: *dictatum*, associated with divine, male authority) of tone rewrites succession to supersession: “Sweet” and “Sweeter” are not comparative estimates of sweetness, but mutually contradictory ideas forced upon each other for rhetorical effect on one hand, and the fulfilment of Germanic Hellenization in verse, on the other. Replacing “sweeter” with “sweet” must be accomplished by replacing “unheard” with “heard”, excavating the true unheard from an articulated blankness, the epigrammatic universal. That which is factually unheard is, theoretically, present between the articulative inaccessibility to hear after “sweeter”, and its “interval”, leading to the punctuative potential manifested in the semicolon, intuiting its presence-in-absence, and alluding to the earlier metaphor in his letters, of

³“It is worth noting that the Greek artists – in their statues, cameos and intaglios – had in mind an ideal facial structure (for gods and heroes) that was meant to express both eternal youth and a repose free from agitation” (162). See *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, originally published in 1798, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Mary J. Gregor for Martinus Nijhoff, 1974. See the reference to “forever young” in the third stanza of Keats’s Ode, and the reference to “men or gods” in the first.

Hellenising without Greece – an intellectual probability without its cultural import, more ideal than real. Keats overturns the argument here: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are [not] sweeter" – this anti Germanic-Hellenization would raise critical eyebrows, leading him to relegate the actual subversion to the subversive (yet conscious) potential between the final "heard" word ("sweeter"), and the "unheard" (un-articulable truth that nevertheless exists in the vacancy between itself, the punctuation, and the concrete semicolon). Important also is Keats exposition of the un-articulable yet true, phallogocentric meaning, created against the false, allusive consciousness of phallogocentric flaccidity – a remarkable political move by Keats⁴, which argues how, by alluding, one rejects the allusion, or how linguistic blind spots become resistive acts through analytical thinking, against second-order ideologies, and how successions become supersessions, when read in-between lines.

Thinking through these linguistic blind spots is an arduous task; it is, therefore, not impossible to observe how exhausted Keatsean diction is, tunnelling its way through allusive subversions and resistances. The caesuric movement in the first three lines, obstructed by a multiplicity of pauses, the internal repetition of similar sounds in "ear", "endeared", "heard" and "unheard"; the ditty in the second line ("therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;) unconsciously contrasted by the reference to toneless ditty in the fourth, followed by an obsession with connotative symbolism across stanzas ("what pipes?" to "soft pipes" to "pipes to the spirit" and later, "piping") exhibits an uncanny cross-referencing and repetitiveness, denotative of exhaustion. The linguistic reflux resisting Germanic Hellenization forces the poet to repeat himself endlessly – "What struggle to escape?" leads to the defeated fair youth who "canst not leave"; metaphors of exhaustion are abundantly found through the use of "bare", "grieve", "fade", "wilt" and an endless array of negatives, which leads one to a significant revelation – Keats is exhausted; it is also transmitted intuitively to his fellow poet, John Clare, who cannot wade through the ideological humdrum of Keatsean allusions, that makes little sense upon analytical reading⁵. The textualization of Keatsean exhaustion is contemplating death, and death-experience is, as Martin Aske had previously argued, a dissimulation of the fragmentary nature of visionary life, blindly offered onto the parergonic text, or the unarticulated but accessible afterword. Keats resists it by deferring an overt representation of this exhaustion, through the trochaic movements observed in "Pipe" in the third line, "Fair youth" and "Bold lover" in the fifth and seventh lines respectively, followed by the paradoxically immortal "life-in-death" for the "She" in the ninth line, leading one to think if Keats is enacting his own deferment, his

⁴"Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence, he imagines false or seeming motive forces. Because it is a process of thought, he derives its form as well as its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors" (459). See Marx and Engels (1965).

⁵"He keeps up a constant al[l]usion or illusion to the [g]recian mythology & there I cannot follow – yet when he speaks of woods Dyads and Fawns are sure to follow & the brook looks alone without her naiads to his mind yet the frequency of such classical accompaniment makes it *wearisome* to the reader (150, italics mine). See Matthews (1971).

own evolution from maidenhood to manhood – the infinite deferment that Friedrich Schlegel subjects his modern poet to.

A simpler way of invoking this dialectic between “two distinct and contrasted realms” (78), between what Kenneth Burke (2003) refers to as “transcendental fever” (78) and “earthly fever” (78), would assume a different meaning altogether, if I were to emphasize that both fevers are linguistic aftereffects of an Ode (by an exhausted poet) that resists the two-pronged ideology of Germanic Hellenization, propagated by Schlegel’s *Study*. In the third last line of the second stanza, where Keats notifies the deferment of the male lover’s “kiss” despite “winning near the goal”, he is engaging in another humorous wordplay; in a desperate attempt to mask his psychological fever, (a “play” on his flaccid phallocentrism) – he is winning not near the “goal”, which is self-evident, but the “gaol” (French: *gaiole*, caged, awaiting judgment/death) – a psychological prison of his own (linguistic) making, that cannot transcend the blind spot between the objective “goal” that the Urn’s male character pursues, versus the semantic fate of classical, ekphrastic destination, leading to the linguistic incarceration that he is subjected to, all the more, for which Keats asks him not to “grieve”, contributing to the peculiarity of the endeavour. To put it axiomatically, what the Ode is made to say, and what Keats makes it mean, are two mutually contradictory realms, in Burkean terms. The goal is written into the text; the *gaol* is the blank enterprise of an insufficient text, superseding it, collapsing upon it. *Keats would rather expose the lie than tell the truth*. Another inversion, slightly along the same lines, would have to be the wilting of the male figure on the urn in the final line of the second stanza; while traditionally construed (and misread) as an alternative for “will”, it ought to be synonymous with *wilting* (from German *irwelhen*: becoming softer *welg*: wetting, etc.) in the archaic sense, meaning flaccidity, along etymological lines. This stands to make more figurative sense, for Keats’s earlier invocation of “soft pipes” uncannily denotes both sexual incapacity in the “fair youth” – a reference to the consumptive Keats (an imbrication between the literal and the figurative), the physiological, “bodily fever”, loaded with repressed desire – and the phallogocentric potential of a deferred, masculinizing project. It leads to the linguistic *agon* of *willed* pursuit, actuated by the transference of fairness to the female figure at the terminating moment of the stanza, from the “fair youth” at the beginning, the exclamation mark symbolizing the hesitant dispossession of value-hierarchy across genders. Deferring embarrassment (by playing with words) through the deference of meaning (“pursuit” *contra* “loth”) forms the crux of Keatsean linguistics. What is striking, however, despite the near-perfect simulation of a modern poet’s imbroglio, is the phallogocentric project that interdicts a gynocentric one; the flaccid pipes are never abandoned, although having been deconstructed to shreds. The lover is still “Bold”; no justification is offered why, except that he is too embarrassed to stand “bare” or naked, exposing the psycho-physiological consequences of his linguistic fever – battered, and barely shielding himself from ideologies alien to his immediate self. Further references to “piping” are met with cloying (*ME. cloyen*: restrict, forbid) “panting”, “burning” and “parching” in the third stanza, but the wasted Keats is not discouraged enough to die from the

exhaustion of his phallogocentric, resistive project of meaning-making.⁶ The stanza's termination with "tongue" is equally significant, as it suggests, literally, speechlessness, and figuratively, the interdicted *lingua*, the inarticulable yet not inaccessible part of language, of that tongue, forcing us to acknowledge Keats's mastery in enhancing provocative meanings, revoking invocations succinctly in his Ode.

"Beauty is, After All, Truth": The Sublime Moment

The final stanza, replete with revisionist allusions back and forth, argues for the end of ideology; the chiasmus is the most eloquent logical utterance within the ideological structure of the *state* of Germanic Hellenization, arresting it in the moment, as Keats's lines, and the punctuations in his 1820 volume symbolize:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! With brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!⁷
When old age shall this generation waste⁸,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"⁹, – that is all

⁶Compare "cloying melody" in Keats's 'On the Sea': the proximity of eternal (hence unconscious) music with conscious encumbrance is more than rhetoric flair: it is devised, as an allusive departure from Shakespeare's *Lear* who audibly visualizes the sea ("Hark! Do you hear the sea?"). Keats intuits this methodology, but exposes the interdicted visibility of such hearing, invoking, uncannily, the unheard, which is certainly not sweeter, but an implied critique of epigrammatic perfection. The "melodist" is deferred from his cloying in the third stanza of *Grecian Urn*, but the allusion resonates through rejection, instead of imitation.

⁷Compare: "Greek sculpture could not have been precisely a *cold* thing; and whatever a colour-blind school may say, pure thoughts have their coldness, which has sometimes repelled from Greek sculpture, with its unsuspected fund of passion and energy in material form, those who cared much, and with much insight, for a similar passion and energy in the coloured world of Italian painting" (191). See Pater (1914) for an outright denial of Keats's fabricated Germanic Hellenization, for his writing exists within the parergonic spaces of his Ode (hence gone cold, when undetected, figuratively speaking), the ideological universal of false consciousness.

⁸Compare with the portrait of the "lively Grecian" in Book IV of *The Excursion* who speaks "Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired;/That hath been, is, and where it was and is/There shall endure, -" (755-57); that "While man grows old, and dwindles and decays;/And countless generations of mankind/ Depart; and leave no vestige where they trod" (760-62). This allusive familiarity arrives at its ideological rupture when the Sceptic emphatically enquires how the "Beautiful region" (ll. 736), brimming with "Love, Hope and Admiration" (ll. 768) would regulate "With truth, the scale of intellectual rank?" (ll. 778, pp. 964). It is pertinent here to note that Keats himself is that poet-sceptic. See *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, with an Introduction by Antonia Till for Wordsworth Poetry Library, 2006.

⁹The untruth of Beauty has received a long list of critical responses since the Keatsean climax; they have been explored, primarily, in two ways: first, through deference between the two categories – Walter Pater writes in 'On Style' that "the one indispensable beauty is, *after all*, truth" (32, emphasis mine). "After-all" delays the inscrutable harmony reflected in Keats's Ode, and this delayed

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know (ll. 41-40, p. 259).

The ambiguity around the last two lines plays around, to begin with, the quotation marks, the way in which they were intended for publication, and the publisher's intervention due to Keats's unavailability during publication. This is diminutive, compared to the deliberate simulation of situational, as well as articulative ambiguity, in order to adjust oneself within the definitional limits of the 'modern poet', as demonstrated by Schlegel in his *Study*:

The *boundaries* of science and art, of the true and the beautiful, are so confused that even the conviction that those eternal boundaries are permanent has generally begun to falter for the most part (89M:19, italics in original).

Let it be so, is Keats's answer: he is keenly simulating Schlegelian confusion by disrespecting the boundaries of beauty and truth, which, from an epistemological perspective, could be enlightening, for the quotation marks indicate Schlegel's Germanic Hellenization in his *Study*, whereas his marked departure, between the comma, the semicolon and the hyphenation, is reduced to a trace, but is there, nevertheless. If the "eternal boundaries" have begun to falter, as Schlegel insinuates, the transient boundaries of chiasmic ideology have permeated the modern *zeitgeist*, remarkably upheld in epigrammatic language, but resisted through quotation marks, alienating the second-order ideology of the Schlegelian 'other' through a

harmony resists the illusion of epigrammatic verity from linguistic possession. See *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895). The other form of disavowal substitutes "is" with "and", stating how conjoining does not emphasize union, but flexes a union with the allusion, with a fellow-poet's epigram, an aversion, not towards the word (as categories), but towards their meaning, hence deconstructing the meaning-making progress without exposing its ideology outright. To cite a concrete instance from Matthew Arnold's *The Study of Poetry* (D.J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera ed., New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), poetry, "fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty... [shall be] its consolation and stay" (261-62). Similarly, in Book I of Robert Bridges's *The Testament of Beauty* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1929), we find how "the sick heart of Keats" (ll. 98, p. 5) fears "such implicit unity/so friendly a passionate love for nature beauty and truth," (705-6, p. 31). The illusion of implicit unity defers chiasmic euphoria, as Martin Heidegger anticipates in *What is Called Thinking?* (Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray tr., New York: Harper & Row, 2017, originally published in 1952), where "We are compelled to let the poetic word stand in *its* truth, in beauty" (19, original emphasis). Keats probably knew, but chose to ignore the repercussions of this beauty-truth amalgamation, pronounced fallacious by the Priest in F.W.J. Schelling's *Clara, or On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*, originally published in 1810. He rebuts how, in "A Platonic Academy...I am highly doubtful about any relationship in which freedom plays even only a part and I do not even venture lightly into this labyrinth. I let justice be done to the warmth of each beautiful heart, only let us take care not to shape the inspiration of feelings and the inventions of longing into general truths; for then there will no longer be any divisions" (17,15). The edition utilized here has been translated with an introduction by Fiona Steinkamp for State University of New York Press, 2002. The influence of Keatsiana, felt within the Detective fiction genre, has been alluded to and summarily rejected for its ideological truth-value, as Hercule Poirot in Agatha Christie's *Hallowe'en Party*, originally published in 1969, buttresses his disavowal towards the end, asserting how "You want beauty...Beauty at any price. For me, it is truth I want. Always truth" (221). See *Hallowe'en Party* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2015). It is rewarding, when one identifies how all characters declaring truth as objective, investigative are male, whereas the ones, being vilified for their addiction to beauty, are *always already* a representative of the opposite sex.

variety of punctations, and re-situating the self as a trace element within the parergonic space of the articulated other and the unarticulated, immanent self. From this line of thought onwards, one could discern how the universalities of knowledge, triggered through a repetition of "all", travesties the bold claims of Schlegel by upholding his Philhellenism bathetically, but perhaps also indicative of his extreme exhaustion with his lengthy discourse combining language, death and art. What Keats exposes without speaking out loud, is – Beauty is [not] truth, truth [not] beauty. The deferment of dialectic oneness, initiated by "is", now delayed by "and", "in", "after all" and the like, arrives at its theoretic extreme when incremental deferment across incremental variations in reproduction of the same leads to the moment of mutual contradiction, which collapses upon the epiphanic moment of its false, mutual assimilation earlier. Keats presents the truth by writing the exact opposite of what it is presented *to be*. While he is forced to enact the transcendental illusion of dialectic harmony, his Ode, situated in Stuart Peterfreund's "sublimely visionary setting" (69), exaggerates, through the dialectic excess of linguistic resistance, the sublime moment of mutual contradiction between "beauty" and "truth", hence antinomian.

It is important to identify that the poem's terminating moment, which could be textualized as Keats's final exhaustion in death, obstinately holds on to one more thing; William A. Ulmer (2017) opines that "Keats avows no aesthetic principles – the "close relationship" of beauty and truth is not proclaimed the essence of great art – but ponders instead his own powers of judgment" (154). Granted, but pondering over himself by travestyng canonical foundations, or actually succeeding in doing so, would be the last great triumph of Keats's masculinizing project, his phallogocentric construct. Embarrassment determines this rhetoric to an extent, as thinking about one's ability to think, in a Heideggerian sense, is both narcissistic and self-gratifying at the same time, hence subjected to repression. What then, is the hierarchized gender of Keats's "friend to man"? Keats's parergonic, subversive assertion continues to remain indebted to Schlegel who, in his controversial novel *Lucinde* (originally published in 1799), comments on how

The Worship of his sublime friend became for him the spiritual foundation and fixed center of a new world. Here all his doubts disappeared; in his genuine possession he felt the value of life and intuited the omnipotence of will. Truly he stood on the fresh green ground of a mighty maternal Earth, and a new sky shaped itself in an infinite vault in the blue ether (93).

There are two problems with Schlegel, the "modern poet", and his ambivalent, categorical distinction between the beautiful and the true – first, his "sublime friend", (un)like Keats's "friend to man", is undoubtedly a woman, who he is attracted to, and who is, at least in the gendered literature of Enlightenment philosophy, not cut out to be categorized as sublime. This ambivalence forces him to imbricate the compartments of what is "truly" sublime, and the beauty of "a mighty maternal Earth". Secondly, the confusion is certainly catatonic for him when she deserts him, and he marries somebody resembling his mother towards the end of the novel, further reinforcing the phallogocentric idea, that the "friend to

man”, in Peterfreund’s “sublimely, visionary setting” is most certainly a masculine category, relegating beauty, at its antinomian moment, to the feminine one, denying sublime agency to the now-disloyal female sex. It is a triumphant victory for Keats as well, since successful supersession of the canon, through outright rejection or subversive deconstruction, guarantees posthumous canonicity. Keats’s Kantianism, unlike Schlegel’s, is on point here, as illustrated by Kant in his *Lectures on Ethics*:

The Sublime is a perfection that is distinguished from the beautiful...the female sex, whose very weaknesses we forgive for the sake of their beauty [is contrasted with] reverence for God, without loving him, just as a miscreant may perhaps have great respect for his upright judge, but never loves him (27:31, 27:32, 14,15).

Beauty, by Kantian logic, is weak and Sublimity strong; if this were applied to the resistive methodology of Keats’s anti-Germanic Hellenization, then he is a conceptual sentry at Kant’s gate. His chiasmic epiphany, subversive or otherwise, exists under the umbrella of the moral law of Enlightenment philosophy; deconstructing Schlegel (feminizing his false consciousness in the process, and distinguishing oneself for the sublime, logical structure, operating between imagination and reason, completing his masculinizing process) draws the Ode closer, through its sublime, antinomian moment, to the highest, abstracted form of Kantian ethics where man forgives woman, strength forgives weaknesses, Sublimity counterpoises the beautiful, and phallogocentrism stands at the linguistic heart of Keats’s moral universe, despite the conflict between faculties, the poetics of exhaustion and corporeal limits on morality.

Conclusion

In this analytical essay, I have argued how phallogocentric construct(s) in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is dependent upon, through a network of complex allusions, the illustration of the modern poet in *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, and how allusions become rhetorical gestures of departure, by deferring conventional engagement. I have further argued how Keats subverts Schlegel’s Germanic Hellenization by situating himself in the parergonic space of textual threshold, re-writing, palimpsestically, the central motif of the poem. One explores how his resistive act re-generates, through this creative anxiety, the need for a Romantic canon that demonstrates mutual contradiction between “beauty” and “truth” instead of dialectic harmony, between the natural and the apocalyptic. Despite the rhetorical gestures of exhaustion leading to flaccid phallogocentrism, Keats holds on to the irreplaceability of the method itself, for the purposes of a universal epistemology, towards the end of his Ode. As Jacques Derrida (1982) brilliantly demonstrates in *The Ends of Man*, Truth marks the end of knowledge vis-à-vis pure intellection, with no contradictory ideology to wrestle against, pontificating the perpetuation of a Kantian, phallogocentric order: “The thinking of the end of man, therefore, is always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thinking of the truth of man” (121).

References

- Arnold M (1975) *The Study of Poetry*. In D J Enright, E Chickera (eds.), *English Critical Texts*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Aske M (1985) *Keats and Hellenism: An Essay*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blunden E (2000) *John Keats: Selected Poems*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications.
- Burke K (2003) Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats. In F Lentricchia, A DuBois (eds.), *Close Reading: The Reader*, 72–87. New York: Duke University Press.
- Bridges R (1929) *The Testament of Beauty*. Clarendon: Oxford University Press.
- Christie A (2015) *Hallowe'en Party*. New Delhi: Harper Collins.
- Derrida J (1982) The Ends of Man. In *Margins of Philosophy*, 109–137. Translated by Alan Bass. Sussex: The Harvester Press.
- Derrida J, Owens C (1979) The Parergon. *October* 9 (1979): 3-41.
- Gittings R (1977) *Letters of John Keats: A Selection*. Clarendon: Oxford University Press.
- Heidegger M (1952, 2017) *What is Called Thinking?* Translated by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray. New York: Harper and Row.
- Kant I (1974) *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant I (1997) *Lectures on Ethics*. Edited by Peter Heath and Translated by JB Schneewind. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marx K, Engels F (1965) *Selected Correspondence*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Matthews GM (Ed.) (1971) *John Keats: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge.
- Peterfreund S (1986) The Truth about "Beauty" and "Truth": Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Milton, Shakespeare and the Uses of Paradox. *Keats-Shelley Journal* 35 (1986): 62–82.
- Plotinus (1991) *The Enneads*. Translated by Stephen Mackenna and Edited by John Dillon. London: Penguin Books.
- Schelling F W J (1810, 2002) *Clara, or On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*. Translated by Fiona Steinkamp. NY: State University of New York Press.
- Schlegel F (2001) *On the Study of Greek Poetry*. Edited by Stuart Barnett. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Schlegel F (1971) *Lucinde and the Fragments*. Translated by Peter Firchow. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ulmer WA (2017) *John Keats: Reimagining History*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pater W (1895) *Appreciation, with an Essay on Style*. Macmillan and Co.
- Pater W (1914) *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays*. Macmillan and Co.
- Till A (Ed.) (2006) The Excursion. In *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*. London: Wordsworth Poetry Library.