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"Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains": Opium Poems Of John Keats

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Abstract

Although the early nineteenth century saw the rise of literature, particularly poetry, it was also the age of the rise of opium use. Opium was once used for pain alleviation and disease treatment. Opium trade grew in popularity and it became a commodity in the 18th and 19th centuries. Poor people were dismissed by some doctors, who suggested that they buy opium straight from pharmacies. Opium was first prescribed as a medicine, or as a component of a medicine, to treat sickness and disease. Later, it was used for recreational purposes. The sale of opium on the streets resulted in a rise in its consumption. Because of the visuals and new visions it produced, some Romantic writers utilized opium to boost their creativity and inspiration. Various 19th Century writers' works have been shown to be influenced by opium use in some critical studies. Samuel Coleridge, De Quincey, Lord Byron, Percy Shelly, and John Keats are just a few of the famous Romantic poets who recorded their opium use for medical reasons or to express themselves creatively. Opium was used to cure rheumatism by Coleridge and for tooth pain by De Quincy. Shelly and Byron, on the other hand, used it for relaxation as an escape from thinking. Some critics believe that Keats's use of opium influenced his creative ability. They believe that he did not use drugs during his earlier literary career, but had already started to use opium upon publishing the second edition of his poetry, which directly impacted his creativity. Through a historical and textual analysis, this paper sheds light on the Opium Poems, particularly in his second collection- It attempts to analyze poems that give a clear impression of the impact of the poet's abuse of opium during the process of poetic creation.

Key Words

Opium- John Keats- De Quincey- Ode to Psyche- Ode to Indolence- Ode to a Nightingale- Romantic poets- Ode on a Grecian Urn- Ode to Autumn.

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Introduction

Romantic poetry, also known as nature poetry, mainly relates to emotional and sentimental situations as being involved in outdoors. Many Romantic poets were unrecognized during their lifetime, but became well-known after their death. Their short lives may have provided less opportunity for them to have been received by the public whilst alive. William Wordsworth (1770–1850) and Samuel Coleridge (1772–1834) however clarified a new stream of Romanticism in Wordsworth's Preface to his second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. Romantic poets can be divided into three groups. The first group includes pre-Romantic poets, or the well-known 'Graveyard Poets' such as [Thomas Gray](#) (1716–71), [William Cowper](#) (1731–1800), [Christopher Smart](#) (1722–71), and [Robert Blair](#) (1699–1746). The Lake Poets are the second group, including [William Wordsworth](#) (1770 - 1850), [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#) (1772 - 1834), [Robert Southey](#) (1774 - 1843), [Dorothy Wordsworth](#) (1771-1855), [Charles Lamb](#) (1775-834), [Mary Lamb](#) (1764-1847), [Charles Lloyd](#) (1775-1839), [Hartley Coleridge](#) (1796 - 1849), [John Wilson](#) (1785 - 1854), and [Thomas De Quincey](#) (1785 - 1859). The term 'The Lake Poets' refers to the poets living in the Lake District in England at the time (Edinburgh Review Online). The third group consists of the Romantic contemporaries, such as Lord Byron (1788 - 1824), Percy Shelley (1792 - 1822), and John Keats (1795 - 1821). They are considered the second generation of Romanticism, who were mostly influenced by the roots of 18th Century literature. This large number of poets established a force in Romantic poetry during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Romanticism and Romantic poetry were a reaction against the

neoclassical poetry of the time, which focused on intellect and reason, whereas Romantic poetry mainly focused on emotion and passion (“Romanticism Introduction”).

Although the early nineteenth century saw the rise of literature, particularly poetry, it was also the age of the rise of opium use. Opium was generally used for pain alleviation and disease treatment. Opium trade grew in popularity and became a "commodity" in the 18th and 19th centuries (W. MaCoy, 307). Poor people were dismissed by some doctors, who suggested that they buy opium straight from pharmacies. Opium was first prescribed as a medicine, or as a component of a medicine, to treat sickness and disease. Later, it was used for recreational purposes. The sale of opium on the streets resulted in a rise in its use and consumption. Because of the visuals and new visions it produced, some Romantic writers utilised opium to boost their creativity and inspiration. Various 19th Century writers' works have been shown to be influenced by opium use in some critical studies. Alethea Hayter's book *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, published in 2015, examines the works of various poets who used opium: Crabbe, Coleridge, De Quincey, Wilkie Collins, Francis Thompson, Keats, Edgar Allan Poe, and Charles Baudelaire. She looks at their work from two perspectives: the context of the century and attitudes concerning the risks of opium use, as well as the influence of opium on the visionary and mystical qualities of these poets' writings. Althea Hayter examines the influence of opium on Romantic poets such as John Keats. She believes they were using opium for medical reasons. "Everyone, in fact, at that period took laudanum occasionally." (30). Except for Wordsworth, many Romantic poets are known to have experimented with opium, albeit many of them merely did so for medicinal reasons (30). "The Milk of Paradise: The Effect of Opium Visions on the Works of DeQuincey, Crabbe, Francis Thompson, and Coleridge" (1934) by Abram explores the effect of these writers' opium use on their works. This book takes a

look at the poets' biographies as a starting point. The findings reveal evidence of opium's influence on the poets' creativity. The negative effects of opium use have been widely discussed. Death, toxic death, and criminal mentality have all been reported as short-term use effects. Euphoria, relaxation, and analgesia are among the other reported effects (Berridge, 446). According to De Quincey's confessions, other noteworthy effects include 'relaxation, procreativity, and stimulation.' Thomas De Quincey compares the effects of alcohol with opium, claiming that while alcohol was popular in the 19th century, opium could stimulate the mind more and make it shine (46). According to M. H. Abrams, opium was used to stimulate creativity (x). As a result, opium's usage has evolved from being a medical treatment to its imaginative capacity of creativity and the thinking process, particularly among literate people. The habit of taking opium, according to Abrams "utilized the imagery from these dreams in his literary creations, and sometimes, under the direct inspiration of opium, achieved his best writing". (ix) As a result, Opium does not only allow poets to learn how to write poetry, but can also directly inspire fresh images and build the structure for shape their works. One would imagine that opium's effect on Romantic writers is a sense of relaxation and ease that allows them to create. According to Alethea Hayter, opium allows the mind to recollect "raw materials" and is the first step towards creativity: "The action of opium may reveal some of the semi-conscious processes by which literature begins to be written" (30).

Samuel Coleridge, De Quincey, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and John Keats are just a few of the famous Romantic poets who recorded as referring to their opium use, using it for medical reasons or to express themselves creatively. Opium was used to cure rheumatism by Coleridge and for tooth pain by De Quincy. Shelley and Byron, on the other hand, were opium addicts who used it for relaxation as an escape from thinking. Another critic, Bayte, believes that the climate at the time was conducive to these Romantics taking opium, claiming that the use of laudanum spread during the Romantic period. At that time, opium was also

given to children in various medicines such as Mother Bailey's Quieting Syrup, Godfrey's Cordial, and Seductive Solution. It was recommended by doctors to their friends and patients for improving health.(7) Thus, this social practice was responsible for many Romantics becoming addicted to opium, as well as other types of drugs. Such drugs were easily purchased from the streets, and as previously mentioned, doctors usually refused appointments for poor people, allowing them to purchase opium directly from pharmacies. Such drugs were prescribed freely for all types of illnesses during that time. When his brother became ill, John Keats began using opium. Following his mother's death, Keats began his training at St. Thomas and Guy's Hospital in London, UK. Prior to caring for his brother Tom, he had gained several years of training and experience. When his brother fell ill, Keats took laudanum on a regular basis until his death. Several of his greatest poems were written during his years of opium addiction, but they were not well received by his audience. Most of John Keats' early poetry was severely criticised. Schwartz mentions negative reactions from the reviews in various contemporary magazines of the time, including the Quarterly Review, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, the Edinburgh Review, the British Critic, and Baldwin's London Magazine. Schwartz goes on to say that only his collection known as 'Poems' received a positive reception in general. However, Keats still did not receive much recognition in the literary world (170). But after publisher editing, Keats' second edition of the *Poems* collection was well received by critics (Scwartz, 173). Some critics believe that Keats' use of opium influenced his creative ability. They believe that he did not use drugs in his early life, during his earlier literary career, but had already started to use opium upon publishing his poetry's second edition, which directly impacted his creativity. Nicholas Roe states that John Keats began taking laudanum in 1819, the same year he published his second collection, which was well received by critics. (4) According to Nicholas Roe, Keats kept on taking the drug after using

it medicinally to treat a persistent sore throat, in order to “keep up his spirits”(6). In contrast, Hayter does not believe that opium influenced his creativity because, according to her judgment, Keats completed the majority of his poetry before 1819. However, the benefits that the poet discovers in opium are intriguing. Schneider confirms that the release of stress and conflict, coupled with a comfortable sense of calm, might sometimes assist an anxious person's inherent abilities of thinking, creativity, or sometimes their actions to be released for a while. However this would not provide any abilities not previously possessed, nor modify the character of his usual capabilities. (40).

Nicholas Roe claimed that opium visions inspired at least two of Keats' greatest poems, 'Ode on Indolence' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. Roe also believed that Keats' use of opium connected him to various mystical Romantic poets including Baudelaire, Blake, Coleridge, De Quincey, Huxley, and Yeats (6). However, Roe's comments on Keats' usage of laudanum risk undermining the poet's lyrical composition. The purpose of this study is to throw light on Keats' odes from his second collection, 'Ode to Autumn', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Psyche', 'Ode to Indolence', and 'Ode to a Nightingale', which he wrote after he began routinely using opium.

1. Dream- Like vision in 'Ode to Psyche'

'Ode to Psyche' is the first poem in Keats' 1819 collection, which was written after he began taking opium. He sees the psyche as old. Due to the classical mythology of 'Psyche,' which is based on Latin imagery, this ode had the same reception as 'Ode to Autumn,' and cannot be matched to it in either language or content. In 'Ode to Psyche,' the poet apologizes to the goddess for revealing her secrets:

O Goddess! Hear these tuneless numbers,
Wrung/By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear/

And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conched ear (1-4)

Here the image of psyche as attractive and youthful contrasts his classical image, however she is not worthy of worship because of her late arrival. He promises to build her a castle and allows her love to see her through the window. When the poet discovers the two creatures in the forest, Psyche and her love, he is unsure whether he is in a state of wakefulness or sleep. "Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see/ The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?" (5-6). The whole scene of finding the goddess and her lover is like a dream, or a divided image, revealed to the poet. He is also unsure whether they were touching or not. The speaker appears to be in an altered state: "Their lips touch'd not, but had not bid adieu, As if disjointed by soft-handed slumber" (16-17). If he sees them, he admits that he cannot feel the world around the scene, and loses his sensory activities:

"No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming. (32-35)"

These lines echo the poet's inability to sense, but they enhance his pleasure, which can be felt while taking opium. De Quincy (390-1) comments on how opium stimulates brain activity, allowing the creation of extravagant intellectual pleasure out of the raw resources of natural sound. Like many of his odes, images of dreaming, fainting, and sleeping are repeatedly used. This impression is enhanced by the few lines of the poem outlined below. Experimental records show some symptoms of opium as a blending between the real and unreal, a feeling of unawareness, sudden sleeping and awakening, and a general relaxation.

2. 'Ode on a Grecian Urn and Real and Unreal Images

The blending between real and unreal is repeated again in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. In this ode, the poet again can imagine a classical artifact, the Urn. The ode is rich in imagery, with real images blending with the unreal. Scenes of men, gods, and maidens are in the poet's imagination as well as in the actual scene. He tries to share the scene in his dreamlike state in order to immortalize it, and so the leaves and the trees are in fact real, but they "cannot fade" (20) in the unreal world. Thus, this blissful world will only be felt in the intellect and imagination of the poet. The reality in the ode lies in its impossibility. Immortality is real, time is not constrained and there is no age limitation. De Quincey admits that the addict will find the world somewhat different, with unlimited time. He notes that space is also amplified by sometimes fantastical degrees, however opium has a power over time, which seems to expand and become boundlessly flexible, and extending to immeasurable fragments, in that it would then be absurd to try to attempt to understand it in normal terms. Then there are the melodies that can never be heard. Readers can understand everything through the poet, but cannot live it as Keats himself could: "Heard melodies are sweet, /but those unheard/ Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;/ Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd," (11-13)

De Quincey also talks about the effect of melodies or music, admitting that opium greatly increases brain activity generally, allowing extensive mental enjoyment natural sound, as previously mentioned. The contrasting images that Keats portrays in his ode are repeated images for opium users, as admitted by De Quincey. He confesses that many contrasting images are repeated in his own vision, such as the fall and rise, the highs and lows, terrors and demons, etc, where there is struggle between truth and beauty. Truth exists in real life whereas beauty is created in the opium induced

world: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty/ - that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know"(49-50).

3. Synesthesia and Hyperesthesia in 'Ode to Autumn'

Ode to Autumn is the last of Keats' poems. As with many of Keats' poems, this Ode is rich in imagery. Autumn is personified: he is the friend of blossom and conspires with the sun. Sometimes, he is a reaper, sometimes a thresher and a gleaner. There is a kind of blending between the real and the unreal. This rich description of the aesthetic images that the poet imagines allows him to integrate and coexist with them as if they were real. This merger between the real and the unreal can be seen in Keats' previous Ode: "Conspiring with him how to load and bless/ With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run; /To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees" (3-5). In her thesis "Writing Under the Influence: The Effects of Opium on John Keats' Poetry," Katherine Moffit states that this process is evident when the poet combines the sensations of seeing with touch, as well as the senses of smell with vision. (28) This psychological heightening of senses is called hyperesthesia, which means extreme physical awareness, leading to synesthesia, which causes one sense to merge with another. (28) Moffit believes that opium use aided in probing the senses. Here, opium expands the vision before the poet and increases his sensibility. Keats's Ode is controlled by sensory symbols for the human heart that include his use of music, sun, red fruits,..etc. The activities of reaping fruits show the dominance of the senses in this poem. There is a clear integration between several senses, the sense of touch with sound as in "And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue" (36). Besides, Keats blends taste and sight in "Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness", and sound and sight in: "And full grown loud bleat, from hilly bourn/ Hedge-cricket sing, and now with treble soft" (30-31). The poet's choice of words was successful in his fusion of vivid images and engaging the reader into the description by sharing the same pleasure experienced by the poet.

4. Numbness: 'Ode to Indolence'

This ode seems to be written under the effect of opium. Though it outlines chronological order, the place is not identified, and the figures are obtrusive. The reappearance of the figure, in three separate occasions, shows the poet's uncertainty. The ode is full of numbness and relaxation, the speaker is very lazy in following the figures, although he knows them. He admits that the figures are just visions, but he conflates them with reality. A kind of unawareness is repeated twice making it difficult for him to know who the three images are, although he identifies them the third time he sees them. They "faded" (23) but he is not able to follow them due to his numbness. These figures embody ambition, love, and poetry. He wishes to join them but he lacks the energy to do so, and his eyes are so tired that he is unable to see anything in reality, but rather just through his imagination. He yields to his imagination to perform his activities. What the poet cannot perform in real life will be performed in his visions. It's a deep and nutritious immersion in the surge of direct feeling, with its flow of moving shadows and 'dim dreams,' according to Stuart Sperry. The Ode serves as both a start and a conclusion in many ways. It is the worst of the sequence, but it also has the most promise. However, if we want to interpret it that way, its failure is due to a lack of willingness rather than a lack of resources." (288). The poet has lost his chances of love and ambition life, and his poetry will not support him financially as there is nothing he can do to support his career because of his indolence due to his opium use. [Walter Jackson Bate](#) elaborates this idea when he compares this poem and his poem "Hyperion". Bate thinks that Keats did not finish his poems, nor did he show any achievements or developments in his financial status (528-530). It seems that the poem was written under the influence of opium. The poet's acceptance of laziness and his complete relaxed state makes the readers accept the idea. Moreover, the readers accept such numbness and indolence as a kind of creativity in Keats's Odes (Bate, 313). This acceptance of indolence will be reconciliation with his hardships. The poet is in such a relaxed state as to accept life as

it is, and this reconciliation will not occur without opium. The poet is weak, his pulse is slow, and he feels no pain: "Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;/ Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower/ O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense/ Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?" ("Ode on Indolence" (17-20). These symptoms are similar to the symptoms felt whilst under the influence of opium. (Ober, 871) Again he blends reality with non-reality when he sees visions in the night, and then during day these visions disappear: "I yet have visions for the night, / and for the day faint visions there is store" (57-8).

5- Keats's Negative Capability: 'Ode to Melancholy'

'Ode to Melancholy' seems different from Keats's other Odes. It shows the symptoms of withdrawal from opium addiction, including both sadness and crying as outstanding symptoms. The Ode outlines the poet's contrasting states of enjoying life, and thoughts of death. The first stanza advises people not to be overcome by the despairs of life, but the second stanza shows that melancholy is an inseparable part of one's life. Everything beautiful will soon end because it is not eternal. One must embrace sadness because it is a basic part of his life, and a fundamental part of his pleasure: "Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine" (26). Thus melancholy and pleasure are entangled, and in the highest time of joy, melancholy will shine. The poems show a kind of self-destructive pattern, that of one affected by drugs. The rich images of the poem seem to depict alcohol and opium. The "poisonous wine," (2) the "deadly nightshade plant" (4), and the tempting grapes of a goddess" are the best examples. They "drown the wakeful anguish of the soul" (10). "Turning to poison" (23) in the night is the solution to survival. Crying and sadness are unpleasant and distressing (Ober, 881). "Negative capability," is a term defined by various critics as the inability to think and feel. Beauty will perish because it is not eternal, and pleasure will turn to despair. This concept of a negative capacity is to accept reality while doing nothing about it (Bloom,

413). The '[Ode on Melancholy](#)' recognizes that sadness is the inescapable aspect in human psyche, and that happiness and joy are also aspects of human life. Keats writes a letter to George and Thomas in 1817 in which he refers to "negative capacity" as one of the most valuable attributes that an individual could possess. Negative capacity is defined as the ability of a person to be in a state of uncertainty, mystery, or doubt, without becoming irritated and looking for reasons why. When he indicates his character and uncertainties (Keats, 277), he relates to the thought that it is a way of relieving his pains.

6- Confession of an Opiate: 'Ode to a Nightingale'

The state of waking and sleeping is a recurring image in Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale', which is one of his best poetic productions. This ode is full of physical states, such as perplexing, sleeping, flying, drowsiness, and numbness. This is the only poem in which there is a confession related to using the drug: "My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, / Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains" (2-3). Richard Harter Fogle writes:

The drowsy, dull ache in lines 1–4 serves as a framework and comparison for the climax's devastating pleasure while also being inextricably linked to it. As Coleridge used to say - the extremes collide, as also referred to by Keats in his Song of Opposites and the Ode on Melancholy (211). The uncertainty of being awake or asleep is declared when he says: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?" (79-80). The poet is uncertain because of his paralyzed mind. Tagore once wrote that regular consumption of opium not only affects health but also causes 'numbing or paralysis' that blur one's vision and alienates him from the surrounding world. (73)

It seems that the drugged mind causes the existence of some contrasting images of happiness and sorrow. This contrast can be seen when the poet wants to flee from his world that is very

pessimistic, and full of “weariness, the fever, and the fret” (23), where man cannot enjoy his youth, but just feels despair. The poet compares his own sad life to the happy life of the nightingale, who is full of happiness, and “Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, / But on the viewless wings of Poesy,” (32-33). Other contrasting images of pleasure and pain can be seen in comparing his “full of sorrow” life to the nightingale’s “full-throated ease”, and the “full of warm South/ Full of the true” that the poet lacks. The real painful life of the poet is released in his contrasting imagination. This reconciliation with the nightingale causes a wholeness which the poet seeks. There are other symptoms of taking opium related to the fact that the poet is a regular opium user. The inability to see and the perplexing of the mind to think in lines 21 to 34 are best examples of such symptoms. The inability to perceive, the mixing of the senses with each other, the presence of contradictions in feelings, and the desire to share the bird’s flying are repeated in the ode. It seems that Keats took opium to ‘fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget’(20). The poet’s autobiography shows his struggle to cope with his difficult, complex -life-

Conclusion

Keats’s Odes are his great achievements. Composed in 1818 and 1819, they were written at a period of time in which he witnessed many painful experiences, including his father’s death after falling from a horse, the death of his mother and his uncle from an unidentified disease, as well as the death of his brother Tom. When he nursed his brother, he experienced much about various drugs, even mixing various drugs to make his own medicine. This is also the **same** period of time when he started using opium, finding relaxation and pain relief.

Keats’s Odes reflect his conflict between himself and the outer world. Most of the odes include hallucinations and Greek myths. Such involvement in the mythical world shows the poet’s ability to blend real with unreal. His odes shed light on his

awareness of his pains and his attempts to relieve them. His medium is visions and imagination to find rest and relaxation from his own pains. He takes opium to relax and also to come up with the exact images he needs to express and liberate himself from the reality of his pains. Taking opium allows Keats to overcome his personal illnesses and worries, and accept them for what they are.

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Appendix

1. Ode to Psyche

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:

Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing, on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aureorean love:
The winged boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

O latest born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;

No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swung censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

2. Ode on a Grecian Urn

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**Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?**

**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
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
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!**

**Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.**

**Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,**

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

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!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

3. To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

4. Ode on Indolence

'They toil not, neither do they spin.'
One morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowèd necks, and joinèd hands, side-faced;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced;
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again; as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return;
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.
How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
Was it a silent deep-disguisèd plot

To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:
O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
And ached for wings, because I knew the three;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with fatiguèd eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:
O folly! What is Love? and where is it?
And for that poor Ambition! it springs
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—
At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
And evenings steep'd in honey'd indolence;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

And once more came they by:—alas! wherefore?
My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
The open casement press'd a new-leaved vine,
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;

O Shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return!

5. Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shalt taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

6. Ode To A Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,

While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?