

John Keats's 'Hyperion' Project: A Historical Approach

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Keats is the only man I ever met with who is conscious of a high call and is resolved to sacrifice his life or attain it [. . .].¹

John Keats's endeavour in the genre of epic was awkwardly sustained, abandoned halfway, and perhaps in some respects ill-conceived. It arguably constitutes a story of failure. Yet out of this difficult undertaking came two poems of great critical merit: 'Hyperion' and the revised version 'The Fall of Hyperion'. Despite their unfinished state, these poems, concerning a dynastic transition in Greek mythology, have been found to be among Keats's finest achievements. The present article on the 'Hyperion' project has a two-fold aim. First, it takes an overview of the critical reception of the 'Hyperion' poems to the present. Second, the article historicizes the epic project itself; to be more exact, it maps out the cultural-historical interactions that took place in its conception and execution. Since the 1970s, many attempts have been made to illuminate the politics underlying Keats's epic texts, as will be shown below. My approach is more expansive: I bring literary, cultural, political, and social perspectives into an analysis of his challenge to the 'all-encompassing' genre and attempt to present a more comprehensive picture of his project than promulgated before now. As well as affirming the poet's intense engagement with history, I wish to suggest that Keats's epic writing is more far-reaching in its scope, and more strategic in its response to the early nineteenth-century public discourse than has been supposed.

Despite its importance in the accepted narrative of Keats's poetic development, the 'Hyperion' project has not generated a corresponding book-length study to date. By extension, criticism of either 'Hyperion' poem has rarely extended further than a book chapter. This somewhat cold reception is not

entirely due to the brevity of the texts (the first version contains 884 lines; the second, 529). Suggestive in this context is a view of Keats's character in an entry for 29 March 1821 in the historical painter Benjamin Robert Haydon's diary. As a one-time staunch supporter of Keats's more difficult ventures, Haydon noted down his memoirs of the deceased poet in a tone touched with bitterness. Unable to resist commenting on Keats's inefficiency, Haydon complains that the poet 'had no decision of character', and 'no object on which to direct his great powers', adding that, during Keats's last days in Hampstead, he returned to the fold of his early mentor Leigh Hunt, the painter's adversary (*Diary*, II, 317). Haydon's critique is most acute in alluding to 'Hyperion': 'One day he was full of an epic Poem! another, epic poems were splendid impositions on the world! & never for two days did he know his intentions'. In this, Haydon, who continually worked on the grand historical theme, saw in Keats's seemingly shifting view of epic a sign of weakness. When critics come to rescue Keats, therefore, they can only bypass Haydon's charge and seek for a plausible explanation, perhaps resorting to the chameleonic versatility of his 'poetical Character' that belongs to Shakespeare too, but neither Milton nor Wordsworth.²

A century later, Keats's capacity for an epic project was squarely questioned by the critic Raymond Dexter Havens, who first discussed the powerful impact of *Paradise Lost* on the 'Hyperion' fragments. While making an observation that anticipates the keynote for the later studies on Keats's development — 'his apprenticeship to Milton made a different poet of him' — Havens concluded:

The natural loftiness of character, the strong moral purpose, the deep concern over political affairs, the devotion to liberty, the scholarly interests, these were qualities quite alien to him who summed up all human knowledge in the words, 'Beauty is truth, truth is beauty.' Furthermore, Keats was very young, he lacked the nobility that comes from great sacrifice, the discipline of close study, the 'years that bring the philosophic mind.' [. . .] His venture on the epic heights was in the nature of a *tour de force*: he could sustain it for a short time, but he could not breathe freely in the cold thin air, and soon turned back to the rich lowlands that he loved.³

Keats was thus disinherited by the Miltonic standards of epic: it seemed highly doubtful to Havens whether the young poet was sufficiently scholarly, high-minded, morally principled, politically enthused, and earnest about liberty to attempt an epic poem. However, the reception history of Keats after Havens turned out to rectify the critic's hasty judgment. Keats's access to the intellectual legacies of the Enlightenment in, especially, medicine, chemistry, natural religion, and historiography, as well as his Voltairean scepticism, has since been fully explored.⁴ The politics of his poetry has also drawn much attention since the 1970s, to the extent that 'Hyperion' is now recognized as a major text that defines the Keatsian mode of political engagement. Before the appearance of New Historicist readings, however, the first version tended to be regarded as discontinuous with history. For example, in the same line as other Romantic poets, Brian Wilkie presented Keats as an heir to the spirit of innovation fundamental to the epic tradition, adding that the most serious liberty he took from the tradition was to dismiss history:

His real theme is another kind of progress, the progress in individual development which every man experiences if he survives the ordeal of growth in the world. Wordsworth too had made this subject heroic argument, but he had combined with his concern for what is changeless in man a sense of historical urgency in preaching the doctrine of changelessness to a generation that had forgotten it and had therefore lost hope and nerve. But neither version of *Hyperion* contains such a sense of historical charisma; the two poems are doctrinal to man but not to an age or nation.⁵

Wilkie's endorsement of human, rather than historical, values in the narrative of 'Hyperion' was challenged by Marxist critics such as Marjorie Levinson and Daniel P. Watkins, who convincingly argue that the poem participates in an ideological war through a poetics of allusion, constructing a network of meanings from political debates that occurred in the turbulent years before and after Waterloo.⁶ This opened up a perspective on 'Hyperion' as 'doctrinal to an age and nation', a fully-fledged would-be candidate for 'Miltonic status'.

Critics also turned to the poet's psychological process of creating the divine characters in the Hyperion story. Geoffrey H. Hartman has revealed the com-

plex psychology of the authorial self moving from the objective mode of the first version to the subjective one of the second.⁷ With the first ‘Hyperion’, Stuart M. Sperry saw in its classical version of the Fall a complex of Keats’s concerns, ranging from the hierarchy of poetic types to the need to humanize Milton’s Christian theodicy.⁸ In penetrating the intricate subtext of the story, however, this kind of approach is more or less preoccupied with the cause of Keats’s abandonment of the project — Hartman identified an inescapable impasse in the proto-modernist search for artistic form, while Sperry deduced the insurmountable task of unifying dissociated modern sensibilities. The same may be said of the psychoanalytic approach to Keats’s reception of Milton, whose starting point is to take the statement that ‘Life to him would be death to me’ — made as regards Milton’s artificially Latinate style, as opposed to Chatterton’s ‘native’ language (*Letters*, II, 212) — as containing an unconscious struggle with the great weight of poetic tradition. Take, for example, Harold Bloom’s analysis, in which Milton emerges as an oppressive figure from whom freedom must be earned.⁹ The second ‘Hyperion’ is among Bloom’s most important texts, but he only assessed whether Keats overcomes the embarrassments of the great past — the poet succeeds in finding a new kind of tragedy, but finds access to it fatal — on the basis of the symbolic features of the goddess Moneta. However, the influence studies that followed have been more descriptive than theoretical, and concerned more with a shaping narrative of Milton’s impact, as is Beth Lau’s research concerning Keats’s annotations to *Paradise Lost*.¹⁰ Such a point of view liberates us from the assumptions of modernist ideology, so that we may place the poet’s experiment with the narrative mode within the wider context of a contemporary epic practice.

The burgeoning of epic poems in the Romantic age was a consequence of an increasing national crisis and an important shift in literary fashions. In 1782, the already known poet and critic William Hayley published a series of epistles addressed to William Mason, *An Essay on Epic Poetry*, in which the author urged his friend to undertake an epic enterprise:

Let us, and Freedom be our guide, explore
The highest province of poetic lore,

Free the young Bard from that oppressive awe,
 Which feels Opinion's rule as Reason's law,
 And from his spirit bid vain fears depart,
 Of weaken'd Nature and exhausted Art!¹¹

However, Hayley's call fell on deaf ears: in his late fifties, the 'young' Mason hesitated to 'ascend Parnassus's highest mound' (v. 413). Yet around the turn of the century, galvanized by the French Revolution and the war with France, a consternation of young poets appeared who set themselves the task of writing a 'heroic song', which they accomplished — in some cases, on more than one occasion.¹² Their need to define a nation made the genre a battlefield of ideologies: the established order of things was challenged or championed in their search for a principle that would guide the divided nation into a united whole. For materials, they ransacked the history of not only their own country — say, that of Anglo-Saxon times — but other nations or cultures. With the genre's formal stability shaken from the bottom, the poets also appropriated epic conventions — physical combat and 'epic machinery', to name but two — in a politically involved way. According to Michael O'Neill, epic was understood as 'a genre marked by its width, inclusiveness, [and] openness', and also by 'its virtual unattainability in its purest form'.¹³ To return to Keats's project, this seems to be a reassertion of his attempt's belatedness, but its historical context may prompt a reconsideration of his recasting of 'Hyperion' in the light of the strategy for a new method of communication. While awareness of the paradigm shifted from, in his words, 'Religion' to 'human Knowledge' — 'a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being' — Keats first relied on the 'Muse' for narration, but relinquished this in his second attempt, instead employing a first-person Dantesque voyager (*Letters*, I, 282). In this switch, then, Keats might have intended more than merely to foreground his inner strife, that is to say, to generate a form that best accommodates and conveys the politics of his narrative.

Keats's fascination with epic began in his school days at Edmonton, and developed through his friends' assistance. In one verse-letter, his early mentor Charles Cowden Clarke is thanked for having shown him that 'epic was of all the king | Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring'.¹⁴ When Keats imagined a choir of Apollo in 1815, he admitted into it 'Bards, that erst sublimely told | Heroic deeds, and sung of fate' ('Ode to Apollo', 3–4), among whom are included Homer, Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Tasso. Keats's early enthusiasm for the mighty poets may be worth discussing in relation to the formation of both his political and literary sensibilities. However, the present article, positioning his epic venture in its cultural framework, will benefit more from directing our attention to Benjamin Robert Haydon, a practitioner of the sister-art of poetry. In many ways, Haydon can be termed an epic painter. He had an obsession with extravagantly large canvases, and painted heroic figures such as Christ, Napoleon, and the Roman soldier Marcus Curtius. No less important, however, was his formidable devotion to his enormous *Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*, which extended over five years and brought him into perennial debt, the anxieties, desires, and struggles surrounding which are recorded in the painter's diary. He regularly reflected on the progress of the work, especially the head of the Saviour at the centre, and prayed to God — perhaps inspired by Milton's invocation in Book III of *Paradise Lost* — for the strength to sustain his integrity and persevere through his failing sight, since the destiny of British art seemed to rest on his success in historical painting, a genre which had lost public favour. In short, Haydon was an embodiment of, in Keats's words, an 'epic passion' (*Letters*, I, 278). In a lecture in his later years, Haydon proposes a definition of the epic common to poetry and painting:

The epic relates to any high and abstract principle, which elevates our nature in thought and action morally; or to any power, natural or supernatural, of element, flood, pestilence, or earthquake, to resist which is impossible, physically; and the highest species of Epic, the sublime, is when the mind, soaring above the miserable inefficiencies of the body, defies the destruction of both for any impassioned affection, noble sentiment, grand object, or great patriotic principle.¹⁵

Christ's Entry, conveying the idea of the victory of revealed religion in an age of scepticism, is a classic example of his 'epic' practice, in which his studied particularity extends from Christ on the donkey to the characters surrounding Him. This is one point of divergence from his one-time master Henry Fuseli, who, in his *Lectures on Painting*, states that, to quote from Haydon's text, '[t]he aim of the Epic painter [. . .] is to impress one general idea, without descending to those subdivisions which the detail of character presents'.¹⁶ Haydon's belief is that characters must be 'distinguished from each other by detail, or difference of character', as exemplified by Michelangelo's fresco in the Sistine Chapel, or by Homer's epics.

Keats's letter of 31 October 1816 registers the excitement he felt when invited to meet Haydon: 'Very glad am I at the thoughts of seeing so soon this glorious Haydon and all his Creation' (*Letters*, I, 114–15). Through Leigh Hunt's journal the *Examiner*, Keats had been familiar with the painter's achievements, campaigns, and theory of art. By the time of their meeting, Haydon had finished three major works — the maiden canvas *Joseph and Mary Resting on the Road to Egypt* (1807), the much-praised *The Assassination of L. S. Dentatus* (1809), and the commercially successful and locally honoured *The Judgment of Solomon* (1814) — and soon afterwards elatedly embarked upon *Christ's Entry*, his largest project to that point. After the eruption of what would become a life-long quarrel with the Royal Academy of Arts, it was the *Examiner* that came to his aid. In early 1811, the art critic Robert Hunt heralded the approach of a new age in the world of English art — in a manner, indeed, that anticipated the famous 'Young Poets' article written five years later by his brother:

Some cheering rays appear to glimmer on the horizon of Art, which may expand with a genial influence over its celestial hemisphere; and the telescope of Hope must be more than ordinarily deceitful, if the prospect is not, in some degree at least, realized. In defiance of the little pecuniary stimulus to youthful genius, and with the neglect of the established Professors staring them in the face, young Artists, prompted by a praiseworthy ardour in the pursuit of their Art, appear to be laying in a stock of excellence, which will entitle them to fill the stations previously occupied by their able predecessors. Messrs. Haydon, Hilton, Cooke, Perigal, Jo-

seph, Agar, &c., are cultivating those seeds of genius in Historic Painting, which cannot fail of producing a vigorous harvest of talent, fostered as they are by a persevering industry.¹⁷

Robert Hunt also supported Haydon's plea for the government purchase of the Elgin Marbles, whose arrival in Britain seemed to be epoch-making, repeating a need for the generation of national funds for 'those Arts which enrich, inform, and exalt a nation'.¹⁸ In a 1815 report on the early stages of *Christ's Entry* that called the work 'the morning of a day of triumph to the British School', the anonymous writer predicted that it would silence Haydon's enemies.¹⁹ In March of the next year, Haydon's signed article appeared in which he defended the beauty and authenticity of the Parthenon sculptures, against which Richard Payne Knight, the eminent antiquary, had testified before the committee of the House of Commons, alerting the reader to what he called the pernicious sophisms of connoisseurs. Haydon positioned himself at the vanguard of public taste; in publicizing his opinions, he emerged as a rebel against 'the despotic defiance of all candour and common sense' and a promoter of 'works which will produce a revolution in both Arts' (painting and sculpture).²⁰ Two weeks later, Wordsworth published a sonnet, 'To B. R. Haydon, Painter', in which the poet discerned a professional affinity with the painter in pursuing the demanding 'Creative Art'.²¹ The 'Mind and Heart' must be 'Heroically fashioned [. . .] to infuse | Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse', wandering in the loathed 'Desert', Wordsworth asserts, heightening their morale and cohesion in his conclusion that 'Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!' (4, 5–6, 7, 14). After the Marbles were finally taken into state ownership in July that year, Leigh Hunt commemorated Haydon's rewarded labour in the same spirit of fellowship, representing it as an angelic act of unveiling that recalled Wordsworth's image of an inspired prophet. The sonnet 'To Benjamin Robert Haydon', positioning the addressee as a successor to Michelangelo and Raphael, affirms that it is 'glorious [. . .] to have one's own proud will', but further holds it 'nobler still' to 'feel one's self, in hours serene and still, | One of the spirits chosen by heav'n to turn | The sunny side of things to human eyes'.²²

Though Keats's results were mixed, the 'glorious' Haydon in these writings

seems to have enabled Keats to conceive the qualifications for a high mission that are not affected by the difference in the two men's profession: the sense of calling, a passion for the cause, prophetic vision, and patriotism (in short, 'Miltonic qualities'). His first visits to Haydon's studio in November 1816 prompted two sonnets couched in his predecessors' sonnetizing language and rhetoric. Generalizing the object of praise, 'Addressed to Haydon' enumerates in its first and second quatrains the painter's virtues, including 'Highmindedness, a jealousy for good, | A loving-kindness for the great man's fame', and 'singleness of aim' (1–2, 6), then imagines his final victory as a national feat:

How glorious this affection for the cause
 Of stedfast genius, toiling gallantly!
 What when a stout unbending champion awes
 Envy, and Malice to their native sty?
 Unnumber'd souls breathe out a still applause,
 Proud to behold him in his country's eye. (9–14)

In 'Addressed to the Same', together with Wordsworth and Hunt, Haydon forms a trio of living great men, the last characterized by a 'stedfastness' that 'would never take | A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering' (7–8). It is apparent that Keats's portrayal of Haydon lays emphasis on his devotedness ('stedfast', 'stout', and 'unbending'): the mental quality which, as we saw, was reported to have been lacking in Keats. Haydon's idealization was completed in a sonnet of March 1817, 'To Haydon' — through a process, indeed, of self-mortification. Having viewed the Marbles in Haydon's company at the British Museum, Keats feels unqualified to speak about these 'mighty things' (2), apologetically murmuring: 'In this who touch thy vesture's hem?' (10). The poet's frustrated speech results in further embarrassment: he is excluded from the final picture in which Haydon, a seer, stands apart from the ignorant crowd, even if his own pride is barely saved by palliative abuse:

[. . .] when men star'd at what was most divine
 With browless idiotism — o'erweening phlegm —
 Thou hadst beheld the Hesperean shine
 Of their star in the east and gone to worship them. (11–14)

Like the polar star in the 'Bright Star' sonnet, the steadfast Haydon was a beacon for the poet's exertions in composing four thousand lines for *Endymion* through a 'trial' of creative imagination (*Letters*, I, 169). At its outset, Keats practised the withdrawal from his brothers and associates Haydon had advised. In reply to the poet's letter that discloses his inner turmoil, Haydon writes:

I think you did quite right to leave the Isle of white [*sic*] if you felt no relief in [having] being quite alone after study — you may now devote your eight hours a day with just as much seclusion as ever — Do not give way to any forebodings they are nothing more than the over eager anxieties of a great Spirit stretched beyond its strength, and then relapsing for a time to languid inefficiency — Every man of great views, is at times thus tormented — but begin again where you left off — without hesitation or fear — *Trust in God* with all your might My dear Keats this dependence with your own energy will give you strength, & hope & comfort [. . .]. (*Letters*, I, 134–35)

Haydon then turns to his own process of raising himself from his 'troubles, & wants, & distresses' by means of nothing but his trust in God, before assuaging the poet's anxiety by interestingly sublimating himself on pain of self-contradiction: 'in every want, turn to the great Star of your hopes with a delightful confidence which will never be disappointed' (*Letters*, I, 135). Importantly, Haydon's pep talk offers an early glimpse of how Keats trod 'the road to an epic poem' (*Letters*, II, 42).

In late 1818, Keats's spirit was again 'stretched' beyond its power, composing 'Hyperion' in 'the hateful siege of contraries' (*Letters*, I, 369): the pressing identity of his dying brother Tom and the siren charms of Fanny Brawne. He suspended his epic poem around the time of Tom's death, and before long took up the heart-easing love-romance 'The Eve of St Agnes', drifting into a curious state of indolence once it was finished. This digression, however, did not mean to debar him from his pretensions to fame in the genre of epic; it meant, rather, passing through an inevitable phase of the life-cycle of an aspiring poet. It is the experience of that 'languid inefficiency' shared with Haydon that had led Keats to approach Milton in his real poetic life. Annotating the

half-title page of his copy of *Paradise Lost*, Keats perceives in its author a working union of two contrasting claims: the 'exquisite passion for what is properly, in the sense of ease and pleasure, poetical Luxury' and the 'self-respect and feel of duty performed'.²³ '[T]here was working in him as it were that same sort of thing as operates in the great world to the end of a Prophecy's being accomplished: therefore he devoted himself rather to the Ardours than the pleasures of Song, solacing himself at intervals with cups of old wine', adds Keats. This balancing act between intensification and relaxation may account for the stylistic change in Book III of 'Hyperion', although critics are generally dismissive of it as a recurrence of his early voluptuous idiom.²⁴ The meandering course of his epic journey thus suggests that the effect of his intimacy with Haydon was not only extensive, but engagingly complicated. Despite his initial glorification, Haydon is likely to have demystified the genius of an epic poet through his nonlinear practice.

In Haydon's brotherly exhortation, one point remains to be discussed: the necessity for solitude on the *gradus ad Parnassum*. Lionel Trilling, a most perceptive reader of the poet's letters, has much to say about his retiring quietness and social geniality, placing due emphasis on each aspect. Practising 'a certain courteous withdrawal from social competitiveness', Keats luxuriated in his inner resources, Trilling writes, asserting that separateness was 'a normal aspect of his genius', but the critic re-emphasises that the poet was 'not more apart', going on to stress his love of company in general and family in particular.²⁵ In this, Trilling rightly checks an over-emphasis on Keats's inwardness, but fails to notice an aspect of solitude peculiar to the latter: solitude as discipline. For Keats, solitude was first alarming at a distance, whose enjoyment, even after a reconciliation was achieved, was exhausting, as shown by his remark concerning the 'great solitude I hope God will give me strength to rejoice' (*Letters*, I, 415). The discourse on solitude and retirement has been politicized in recent Keats studies; from the perspective of the Cockney School's ethics of cheerfulness, the retreat from the external world, or isolation in nature, may represent a reactionary hotbed whose emotional symptom is melancholia or despair.²⁶ Around the turn of the century, however, the solitary mode took on a wider cultural importance; edifying, rather than warning, narratives of solitude attracted many a reader.²⁷ In the epic tradition, separateness, physical or mental,

is an indicator of how determined Keats's engagement with the genre was. Behind his withdrawal, one should, however, not miss Milton as an influential model, whose lines, carrying a proverbial ring — 'solitude is sometimes best society, | And short retirement urges sweet return' (*Paradise Lost*, ix. 249–50) — edified his readership whose opinion was moderate. More important, however, is that his mesmerizing images of seclusion in 'Il Penseroso' fashioned many votaries of solitude. It is this Miltonic influence that became crucial in the shaping of Keats's epic self after *Endymion*. As such, Milton's studious solitude was particularly formative, as described in a lecture of Hazlitt that he attended. For Keats as for Wordsworth, and as careful analysis will show, the archangel Satan's disruptive voyage to Earth in *Paradise Lost* was of a consistently allegorical value. Probably, Keats's adaptation of it to his inner life was a heroic gesture aimed to negotiate the distress of his clan, a nation or mankind.

Here enters Keats's prophetic zeal. Just as Milton's pursuit of the goddess Melancholy is crowned with the attainment of a prophecy in a hermit's cell, Keats's sublime solitude may be orientated towards a prophetic undercurrent in the Hyperion story. In the Romantic age, eschatological discourse was enkindled by the American and French Revolutions and continually fuelled by the rise and demise of Imperial France, finding its way into a calendar of the Apocalypse. Among those personages who arrested public attention with their scenarios for the last days of the world, and who were given full coverage in Hunt's *Examiner*, were the prophetess Joanna Southcott and the rationalist social reformer Robert Owen. As well as witnessing the elasticity of millenarian rhetoric, both their visionary agendas were marked by an underlying desire for self-dramatization as an inaugurator of peace and unity. These high-profile ramifications of Christian prophecy in the 1810s, as well as editorials and political essays in the *Examiner*, may provide fresh insight into the narrative of 'Hyperion'. In particular, it is worth considering the messianic potential of Keats's idol, Apollo. Haydon dwelt on this topic in his diary of 1817, comparing the pagan god with Christ, who was on the way to figuration on the canvas of *Christ's Entry*. If 'Hyperion' is an ideal fragment — Hunt called it 'a ruin in the desert, or the bones of the mastodon'²⁸ — it must organically relate to the unwritten part of the story, thus tempting us to restore the contours of its 'lost'

climax, with the aid of the prophetic statements excavated from Keats's letters and poems.

Notes

1 *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. by Willard Bissell Pope, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960–63), II (1960), p. 107. Hereafter incorporated in the text.

2 *The Letters of John Keats: 1814–1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), I, 386. Hereafter incorporated in the text.

3 Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922; repr. 1961), pp. 201–14 (p. 214).

4 The major studies of Keats's learning in the disciplines of science and his medical training include Donald C. Goellnicht, *The Poet-Physician: Keats and Medical Science* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984); Hermione de Almeida, *Romantic Medicine and John Keats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and *John Keats and the Medical Imagination*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). For Keats's response to the tradition of natural religion and theological debates, see Robert Ryan, *Keats: The Religious Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). Important too in this line is a study of Keats's extensive knowledge of Voltaire's iconoclastic thinking: Stuart M. Sperry, 'Keats's Skepticism and Voltaire', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 12 (winter, 1963), 75–93. This can be complemented by Ronald A. Sharp's reading of Keats's poetry, including 'Hyperion', as an effort to humanize Christian values in *Keats, Skepticism, and the Religion of Beauty* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979). On Keats's reading of eighteenth-century historiographers, considerable rewards may be derived from Greg Kucich, 'Keats's Literary Tradition and the Politics of Historiographical Invention', in *Keats and History*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 238–61. A recent and wide-ranging study of Keats's indebtedness to the Enlightenment is Porscha Fermanis, *John Keats and the Ideas of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

5 Brian Wilkie, *Romantic Poets and Epic Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 186.

6 Marjorie Levinson, *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 191–226; Daniel P. Watkins, *Keats's Poetry and the Politics of Imagination* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), pp. 85–103.

7 Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'Spectral Symbolism and Authorial Self in Keats's "Hyperion"', in *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 57–73.

8 Stuart M. Sperry, *Keats the Poet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp.

155–97.

9 Harold Bloom, 'Keats and the Embarrassment of Poetic Tradition', in *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 131–42 (p. 139); and *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 144–59.

10 Beth Lau, *Keats's Paradise Lost* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

11 William Hayley, *An Essay on Epic Poetry; In Five Epistles to the Revd. Mr. Mason* (London: Dodsley, 1782), i. ll. 29–34. Hereafter included in the text.

12 On the 'epomania' of the Romantic age and the transformation of epic, see Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 158–79; Lynda Pratt, 'Epic', in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 332–49; and Herbert F. Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse 1790–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 49–233.

13 Michael O'Neill, 'Romantic Re-appropriations of the Epic', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 193–210 (p. 193).

14 *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. by Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978), 'To Charles Cowden Clarke', ll. 66–67. All references to Keats's poetry are taken from this edition. Hereafter incorporated in the text.

15 Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design* (London: Longman, 1846), p. 299.

16 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 301.

17 *Examiner*, 27 January 1811, p. 57.

18 *Ibid.*, 13 October 1811, p. 662.

19 *Ibid.*, 17 September 1815, p. 605.

20 *Ibid.*, 17 March 1816, p. 164.

21 'To B. R. Haydon, Painter', 1, in *Examiner*, 31 March 1816, p. 203. Hereafter incorporated in the text.

22 'To Benjamin Robert Haydon', 9, 11, 12–14, in *Examiner*, 20 October 1816, p. 663.

23 *The Complete Poems of John Keats*, ed. by John Barnard, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 517.

24 For example, see Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 403–05.

25 Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), pp. 10–14.

26 For example, see Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 82–122

27 The early editions of a best-seller book on solitude (written originally in Ger-

man) concentrate on its beneficial effects. See Johann Georg Zimmerman, *Solitude Considered with Respect to Its Influence upon the Mind and the Heart* (London: Dilly, 1791).

28 *Indicator*, 9 August 1820, p. 347.