THE UTERINE NIGHT AND THE KRISTEVAN BLACK SUN OF MELANCHOLY IN KEATS' *ENDYMION*[*]

KEATS'İN ENDYMION *ADLI ŞİİRİNDE KADİM GECE VE MELANKOLİNİN KARA GÜNEŞİ*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to discuss how the Kristevan melancholy permeates John Keats's poetic romance Endymion. The melancholic Endymion withdraws from the symbolic and retreats into the realm of the unnameable Thing where self and other are undifferentiated. Endymion revolves around a melancholic hero. Endymion is a melancholic character who is immersed in a symbiosis with the maternal Thing; as a result, he retreats into the asymbolic realm from the symbolic domain of linguistic signifiers. This discussion of melancholy in Endymion coheres around "the old womb of night" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 199) which points to the desire to relapse into the primordial Thing of the maternal realm. This desire for the uterine night is also reflected in Endymion's urge to withdraw into the maternal "Cave of Quietude" (p. 204) where the speechless infant merges with the maternal Thing. Further, the yearning for the nocturnal womb and the maternal cave is also seen in the image of Endymion who is "cooped up in the [pre-linguistic] den / Of helpless discontent" (p. 131). This Keatsian realm is characterised by "unseen light in darkness" (p. 188) which resonates with the Kristevan black sun of melancholy. In this uterine night, Endymion also appears as a Kristevan Narcissus, a melancholy being without an external object. This nocturnal womb provides Narcissan Endymion with a psychic interiority where a specular Narcissus/Endymion turns into a speculating one; the contemplative melancholic is endowed with a space for reflection.

Öz

Bu çalışma Kristeva'nın yorumladığı haliyle melankoli kavramının John Keats'in Enydmion adlı şiirsel romansına nasıl nüfuz ettiğine eğilmektedir. Melankolik Endymion simgesel alandan uzaklaşır ve adlandırılamaz olana doğru çekilir. Keats'in bu şiirsel romansı melankolik bir kahraman etrafında örülür. Endymion Kristeva'nın tabiriyle annesel Şeyle simbiyotik bir ilişkiye gömülmüş bir karakter olarak ortaya çıkar. Bu gömülmenin sonucu olarak da romans kahramanı, dilbilimsel göstergelerin imlemediği, simgeselleştirmeye direnen asembolik bir alana çekilir. Bu alan "gecenin kadim rahmi" diye tarif edilir bu şiirsel romansta (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 199). Bu leyli rahim, simgesel tarih öncesine konumlandırılan, adlandırılamaz annesel Şeye işaret eder. Bu geceye ait rahim mecazı, melankolik karakterin "sükûnet mağarasına" çekilme arzusunda da ortaya çıkar (p. 204). Bu sessizlik mağarası, dilsiz çocuğun annesel Şeyle birbirine karıştığı söz öncesi bir alanı betimler; huzuru çağrıştırdığı gibi, karakterin çaresizlikle ve huzursuzlukla tanımladığı ve "içine sıkışıp kaldığı bir deliği" imler (p. 131). Melankolik Endymion için bu dil öncesi mağara, "karanlıkta görünmeyen ışık" olarak ifade edilir (p. 188)). Karanlıktaki ışık mecazı, melankolinin nuru siyahını, Kristeva'nın deyişiyle kara güneşi anımsatır. Rahmin parıldayan gecesinde Endymion sadece kendi ayna imgesiyle bakışan bir Narkissos değildir. Aynı zamanda, bu doğurgan, üretken ve esirgeyen kadim gecenin ezeli rahminde düşen değil düşünen, sadece gören değil görüş de bildiren birisidir. Bu geceye ait rahim ona psişik bir içsellik sağlar ve içgörü bahşeder.

[1] This article is a revised and shorter version of one section of my PhD dissertation, Dialectical Oscillations in Keats: A Kristevan Reading of *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, and the *Fall of Hyperion*, written under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M Sönmez (METU, Graduate School of Social Sciences, 2019).

Introduction

This article aims to trace melancholy in John Keats' *Endymion* by employing Julia Kristeva's understanding of melancholy. Keats's poetic romance centres on a melancholic hero, Endymion, who is engrossed in a symbiosis with the Kristevan maternal Thing; as a result, he relapses into the asymbolic realm from the symbolic domain of linguistic signifiers. This discussion of melancholy in *Endymion* is concerned with "the old womb of night" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 199) which is related with the deep urge to retreat into the primordial Thing of the maternal realm. This yearning for the uterine night is also manifested in Endymion's strong impulse to regress into the maternal "Cave of Quietude" (p. 204) in which the speechless infant mingles with the maternal Thing. Further, this longing for the nocturnal womb and the maternal cave is also revealed in the image of Endymion, who is "cooped up in the [pre-linguistic] den / Of helpless discontent" (p. 131). This Keatsian realm is marked by "unseen light in darkness" (p. 188) that brings to mind the Kristevan black sun of melancholy. In this uterine night, Endymion also emerges as a Kristevan Narcissus, a melancholy being devoid of an external object. This nocturnal womb bestows on Narcissan Endymion a psychic interiority in which a specular Narcissus/Endymion changes into a speculating one; the reflective melancholic is furnished with a space for contemplation, a psychic temple in which to contemplate.

Theoretical Framework: Kristevan Approach to Melancholy

Kristeva's most significant contribution to contemporary literary theory is the distinction that she makes between the semiotic and the symbolic aspect of signification, and the dynamic interplay between the two. The symbolic denotes the structures of language whereas the semiotic points to that which transgresses them. The interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic shows that the subject that dialectically oscillates between the two is always in process or on trial (Kristeva, 1984, p. 22).

The semiotic and the symbolic are the two components of the signifying process. The semiotic goes beyond the denotative efficiency of the communicative aspect of language. The semiotic is associated with the infantile pre-Oedipal; it is a realm related with the maternal, the preverbal, the rhythmic, the musical and the poetic; it lacks structure and precedes sign and syntax. The semiotic is pre-Oedipal since it "precede[s] the distinction between 'subject' and 'object'" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 34). The semiotic element refers to an opaque, ambiguous, condensed, poetic word

which is reminiscent of the undifferentiated realm of the pre-linguistic; therefore, it is seen by the symbolic as an aberration to be eliminated in the interest of clarity and the complete transparency of the word. The transverbal semiotic underlying the symbolic is "rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee, syntax" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 29). By contrast, the symbolic is the realm of language in which the speaking subject is posited by structure and law; it is related to sign, syntax and other linguistic categories. As opposed to the semiotic, the symbolic is an "inevitable attribute of meaning, sign, and the signified object" for the consciousness of a transcendental ego (Kristeva, 1980, p. 134). Since it is closely tied with the pre-Oedipal body, the semiotic "logically and chronologically precedes the establishment of the symbolic" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 41).

The semiotic is related with bodily drives that are discharged through rhythms and intonations; the semiotic aspect of signification allows "the speaking animal to sense the rhythm of the body" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 34). The rhythms of the body are transfused into language. The rhythmicality of the semiotic is beyond the symbolic capacity for representation or signification. Although it designates the unrepresentable in the linguistic realm, the semiotic refers to "an evocation of feeling or, more pointedly, a discharge of the subject's energy and drives" (McAfee, 2004, p. 15-16). It is "the extra-verbal way in which bodily energy and affects make their way into language"; the semiotic might be "expressed verbally" even though it is not restrained by "regular rules of syntax" (McAfee, 2004, p. 17). Since it is not subject to the strictures of the symbolic, the semiotic is manifested through a plurality of meanings and subversion of grammar. Expressions found in music, dance, and poetry are manifestations of the semiotic element. Music, dance and poetry are the realms where the speaking subject ventures beyond the rules of the symbolic established by a conscious ego.

In contrast, the symbolic is related to sign, syntax and structures. The symbolic aspect of signification is "what philosophers might think of as meaning proper"; the symbolic is "the element of signification that sets up the structures by which symbols operate" (Oliver, 2002, p. xiv). The symbolic refers to an articulation of orderly meaning clearly expressed by means of the structures of language such as grammar and syntax. In other words, the symbolic is the realm of language understood as a rule-governed system, of grammar and syntax. In the symbolic mode of signifying, the speaking subject attempts to articulate meaning with as

little ambiguity as possible by means of using what Kristeva terms as propositions and positions in the realm of signification; this "positionality" establishes "the identification of the subject and its object" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 43). In the domain of the symbolic representation, the symbiotic mother-infant relationship is already severed; the dyadic mother-infant symbiosis is replaced by the triadic symbolic which consists of the signifier, the signified and the signifying system.

Having introduced the distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic in the Kristevan theory, it is time to look into her understanding of melancholy. In *Black Sun*[1], Kristeva (1989) attempts to identify a narcissistic melancholy in which the melancholic mourns not the object, but the "Thing", an archaic, unnameable, pre-linguistic, asymbolic pre-object (p. 13). Without a secure link to the symbolic register, the melancholic narcissist embraces a bottomless sorrow, mourning for the maternal Thing. Kristeva states that she is addressing "an abyss of sorrow, a noncommunicable grief that at times, and often on a long-term basis, lays claims upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself" (p. 3). This abyss of sorrow resists articulation since it is beyond the symbolic scope of the signifiable and the representable. The existence of the depressed narcissist is on the verge of collapsing; the lack of meaning in an existence racked by melancholy appears "glaring and inescapable" according to Kristeva (p. 3). She calls it the black sun: "Where does this black sun come from? Out of what eerie galaxy do its invisible, lethargic rays reach me, pinning me down to the ground, to my bed, compelling me to silence, to renunciation?" (p. 3). The Greek etymology of "melancholy" refers to black bile, a humour believed to cause melancholy (Merriam-Webster, 2021); this shows that the existence of the melancholic is marked by the black sun; it is dark and glaring at once.

There is no object for the melancholic; Kristeva (1989) says that there is only an indeterminate, unnamed "Thing" (p. 13). Since the speechless infant cannot make a distinction between subject and object, s/he cannot name or symbolise what s/he has lost. The melancholic does not look for "meaning (constituted through a synthesis of signifier and drive affect)" due to failing to develop "imaginary and symbolic capacities (language in a word) which would ensure a

[1] Kristeva is inspired by the French poet Nerval's metaphor of the black sun. She utilises this metaphor in order to understand the indeterminate Thing, and she uses it as the title of her book, *Soliel Noir / Black Sun*, in which she explores melancholy: "Nerval provides a dazzling metaphor that suggests an insistence without presence, a light without representation: the Thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 13).

successful separation and a viable identity for the subject" (Lechte, 1990, p. 185). Meaning created in the linguistic realm does not exist for the melancholic who is not dissevered from the unsignifiable Thing. Kristeva (1989) posits the Thing as "the real that does not lend itself to signification, the centre of attraction and repulsion, seat of the sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated" (p. 13). The ineffable real is the "impossible to describe, but also ineliminable residue that resists articulation" (McAfee, 2004, p. 62). The melancholic gravitates toward a union with this unrepresentable real, which is a union with the mother and death within a Kristevan lexicon.

Kristeva (1989) describes why the melancholic barely speaks or has the willingness to speak: "Knowingly disinherited of the Thing, the depressed [Kristeva uses depression and melancholy interchangeably] person wanders in pursuit of continuously disappointing adventures and loves; or else retreats, disconsolate and aphasic, alone with the unnamed Thing"; the depressed person feels s/he has been "deprived of an unnameable, supreme good, of something unrepresentable," the Thing that "no word could signify" (p. 13). The aphasic, speechless melancholic is not capable of producing speech; a withdrawal into the realm of the unnameable, incommunicable Thing hampers one's entry into the symbolic domain of language. Therefore, the melancholic is the one that does not use language, words to make up for the lost Thing; s/he does not attempt to chase what s/he has lost: as a result, for the melancholic, "no erotic object could replace the irreplaceable perception of a place or preobject confining the libido or severing the bonds of desire" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 13). The melancholic does not feel s/he belongs to the realm of the symbolic: "Lacking an interest in any objects, the melancholic lacks motivation to engage in the symbolic realm.... The depressed person is like an orphan in the symbolic realm" (McAfee, 2004, p. 63). The deprived and disinherited melancholic feels that he has been bereaved. Kristeva (1989) states that the melancholic who is disinherited of the Thing suffers since s/he has lost his/her primary love while still in the chora.[2] Kristeva explains her notion of narcissistic depression as follows:

[2] Kristeva defines the semiotic chora: "Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (1984, p. 25).

> Far from being a hidden attack on an other who is thought to be hostile because he is frustrating, sadness would point to a primitive self – wounded, incomplete, empty. Persons thus affected do not consider themselves wronged, but afflicted with a fundamental flaw, a congenital deficiency. Their sorrow does not conceal the guilt or the sin felt because of having secretly plotted revenge on the ambivalent object. Their sadness would be rather the most archaic expression of an unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound, so precocious that no outside agent (subject or agent) can be used as referent. For such narcissistic depressed persons, sadness is really the sole object; more precisely it is a substitute object they become attached to, an object they tame and cherish for lack of another. In such a case, suicide is not a disguised act of war but a merging with sadness and, beyond it, with that impossible love, never reached, always elsewhere, such as the promises of nothingness, of death (pp. 12-13).

Instead of bearing animosity toward some object, the depressed narcissist feels flawed, incomplete, and wounded. The bottomless sorrow of the melancholic is marked by an unrepresentable wound that is suffered due to the separation from the mother; the infant becomes "irredeemably sad before uttering his first words" and thus entering the symbolic register because "he has been irrevocably, desperately separated from the mother"; this is "a loss that causes him to try to find her again, along with other objects of love, first in the imagination, then in words" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 6). The melancholic "would feel personally wounded – the loss she suffered was part of herself, insofar as the wound was suffered before she could distinguish her mother from herself" (McAfee, 2004, p. 61). This unsymbolizable wound causes melancholy which corresponds to a union with the mother and death. Therefore, the melancholic withdraws from the symbolic since melancholy results from "an unsuccessful separation from the mother" (Lechte, 1990, p. 185).

The "looming" Thing disconnects one away from the symbolic domain; however, holding on to the other enables "the premature being" to survive the abyss of the incommunicable grief (Kristeva, 1989, p. 15). For the melancholic to survive this abyss, sublimation is an attempt to approach the place where the archaic Thing holds sway: "through melody, rhythm, semantic polyvalency, the so-called poetic form, which decomposes and recomposes signs, is the sole "container" seemingly able to secure an uncertain but adequate hold over the Thing" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 14). An adherence to the unnameable archaic Thing is indeterminately articulated through poetry which decomposes language through semiotic elements

such as musicality and ambiguity in meaning, and which also recomposes language through symbolic elements such as forms, genres and conventions.

Kristeva dwells on the similarity between the death drive and the state of the melancholic wrested away from the realm of the symbolic and relapsing to an archaic state. In this archaic state, boundaries are permeable, things merge with other things. In this heterogeneous realm, self and other are not differentiated. The fall into the realm of the unnameable, archaic Thing is similar to "the notion of the death drive as a tendency to return to the inorganic state and homeostasis, in opposition to the erotic principle of discharge and union" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 16). The melancholic is in the realm of the Freudian death drive, that is "the instinct to return to the inorganic state", as opposed to the realm of Eros, "the preserver of all things" (Freud, 2001, p. 38, p. 52). The narcissistic melancholic displays the death drive "in its state of disunity with the life force" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 17). This discontinuation of the life force refers to the destruction drive. The existence of the melancholic is marked by a withdrawal from the symbolic domain and a regression into the realm of the death drive. As a result of being dissevered from the symbolic, the melancholic experiences a disintegration of bonds, a splitting of self. For the melancholic, words are "cut off from their drive base and emotions become detached from symbolic constructions" since melancholy "holds the drives and the symbolic quite apart" (Lechte, 1990, p. 186). The melancholic becomes attached to the Thing as he becomes detached from the symbolic. Being severed from the symbolic results in disintegration and it unsettles one's sense of cohesion. Kristeva quotes Klein explaining disintegration in the state of melancholy:

> The early ego largely lacks cohesion, and a tendency towards integration alternates with a tendency towards disintegration, a falling into bits ... the anxiety of being destroyed from within remains active. It seems to me in keeping with the lack of cohesiveness that under the pressure of this threat the ego tends to fall into pieces (in Kristeva, 1989, p. 19).

The depressed narcissist does not simply surrender to the self-destructiveness of melancholy; s/he seeks to shield herself/himself with the state of sadness. Kristeva (1989) explains how the shield of sadness helps reconstitute one's sense of cohesion:

> Following upon the deflection of the death drive, the depressive affect can be interpreted as a defence against parcelling. Indeed, sadness reconstitutes an affective cohesion of the self, which restores its

> unity within the framework of the affect. The depressive mood constitutes itself as a narcissistic support, negative to be sure, but nevertheless presenting the self with an integrity, nonverbal though it might be. Because of that, the depressive affect makes up for symbolic invalidation and interruption (the depressive's "that's meaningless") and at the same time protects it against proceeding to the suicidal act. That protection, however, is a flimsy one. The depressive denial that destroys the meaning of the symbolic also destroys the act's meaning and leads the subject to commit suicide without anguish of disintegration, as a reuniting with archaic nonintegration, as lethal as it is jubilatory, "oceanic" (p. 19).

For the melancholic, signs are completely devoid of drive affect; he identifies with the death drive and withdraws from the symbolic; imaginary identifications and symbolic representations amount to nothing for the melancholic. The unnameable Thing can be expressed through the semiotic dimension of language, through transcending non-meaning, the void, the unrepresentable; thus, the melancholic can resurrect in signs. Lechte (1990) points out that "[t]he overcoming of suffering in signs, in imagination – in writing – constitutes one as a symbolic being" (p. 191). However, the fusion with the archaic Thing is fatal as well as exuberant.

The Uterine Night of Melancholy in *Endymion*

Endymion is based on the Greek myth of a mortal beloved by the goddess of the moon, Selene (Graves, 1960, p. 210-211). This myth speaks of Endymion's quest for an immortal goddess whom he has seen in several visions. Keats (2002) gives a brief account of the story in his letter to his sister on September 10, 1817:

> Many Years ago there was a young handsome Shepherd who fed his flocks on a Mountain's side called Latmus. He was a very contemplative sort of a Person and lived solitary among the trees and plains little thinking that such a beautiful Creature as the Moon was growing mad in Love with him. However, so it was, and when he was asleep on the Grass she used to come down from heaven and admire him excessively for a long time, and at last could not refrain from carrying him away in her arms to the top of that high Mountain Latmus while he was a-dreaming (p. 32).

Fascinated by this tale, Keats rewrites it and composes a poetic romance of four thousand lines about it. In this poetic romance, in the course of his wanderings Endymion comes upon an Indian maid who has been abandoned by the followers of Bacchus and, to his utter despair, succumbs to a sensual passion for her; thus, he betrays his love for his celestial ideal. In the resolution, the Indian maid reveals that she is herself Diana, goddess of the moon, the celestial subject of his visions.

To employ the term melancholy would not appear to risk imposing an alien conceptual structure on *Endymion* as melancholy is central to this poetic romance and to the poetic spirit that moves behind this romance: an unsigned obituary says that the "temperament and feeling of the poet, which is always 'much nearer allied to melancholy than to jollity or mirth,' seem to have been the heritage of Keats" (in Matthews, 1971, p. 243). Hence, melancholy holds a special place in Keats 's poetry as it "runs through the poetry like a dark vein of marble" (Waldoff, 1990, p. 195). Melancholy permeates Endymion; this paper intends to demonstrate how the melancholic Endymion relapses into the realm of primary fusion with the maternal Thing and how he withdraws from the symbolic realm of signs. It also aims to show how the Keatsian invisible light in the dark resonates with the Kristevan black sun of melancholy and to investigate that Endymion retreats into the Cave of Quietude where he merges with the archaic mother who is "resistant to meaning" and naming (O'Connor, 1990, p. 44). Furthermore, this study attempts to indicate how an introspective Endymion evokes the Kristevan Narcissus, and that immersion in the primordial maternal Thing is joyful as well as lethal.

The Melancholic Endymion in the Maternal "Cave of Quietude"

Melancholy pervades the whole *Endymion* although it appears to be more accentuated in Book IV. The first book's "contemplative beginning" (Walsh, 1981, p. 39) shows that a feeling of pensive sadness surrounds Endymion: he is beset by "despondency", "the inhuman dearth", "the gloomy days", "the pall" and "dark spirits" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 107). He emerges as a "melancholy spirit" who wishes to "win oblivion" (p. 109); he feels he is spiralling into extinction, nothingness; dejection emanates from him as "[t]he lark was lost in him" even though "the mass / Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold" (p. 109).

Endymion's melancholy is characterised by an abrogation of interest in the outside world; he communes with "melancholy thought" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 156). Although some people in the Latmian community might think that he is

dreaming of “idleness in groves Elysian”, others could notice “[a] lurking trouble in his nether lip”; he is drowned in melancholy as he pines away (p. 111). Similarly, in the company of the priest and the shepherds of Latmos, who tell their “fond imaginations”, a brooding Endymion, “[w]hose eyelids curtain’d up their jewels dim” (p. 117) (his eyes are shut because he looks inside, internally speculating), keeps quiet since the melancholic does not feel he belongs to the realm of the symbolic; the melancholic lacks motivation to engage in the symbolic realm as he “has entirely internalized one who is barely an identifiable other: the mother” (Lechte and Margaroni, 2004, p. 82). Nevertheless, Endymion strives to “hide the cankering venom, that had riven / His fainting recollections” (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 117). Despite his struggle to conceal that he is infected with a pervasive and corrupting bitterness, his senses “had swoon’d off: he did not heed / The sudden silence, or the whispers low, / Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe” (p. 117). A mood of deep melancholy descends upon contemplative Endymion; “in the self-same fixed trance he kept”; he seems to be “as dead-still as a marble man, / Frozen in that old tale Arabian” (p. 117). He withdraws from life and is united with death, with grief that embalms (p. 117), with sadness that he “tame[s] and cherish[es] for lack of another” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 12). He is in a pensive mood and suffers from “the troubled sea of the mind” (Keats, 1818/1986, I. 454). Hence, the melancholic Endymion is crushed underneath the weight of his contemplative mind.

Beset by the “wayward melancholy” of the wild self of the solitary breeze (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 125), which evokes the Ovidian *novitas furores* or Narcissus perceived by Ovid as insane (Kristeva, 1987, pp. 115-116), Endymion, the “[b]rain-sick shepherd prince” (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 134), also seeks to strive against it through his moments of lucidity; he tells his sister what has befallen him:

> Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought
> Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus! –
> Away I wander’d – all the pleasant hues
> Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades
> Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
> Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
> Seem’d sooty, and o’er-spread with upturn’d gills
> Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown
> In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
> Like spiked aloe (p. 125).

Endymion wants to be marked by Peona in the sense that he struggles to signify, to make meaning in the symbolic realm. The verb "to mark" refers to his yearning to name and symbolise his despondency; he longs to be marked, identified, designated, delineated and to be distinguished from other things. This scene shows in another aspect the dialectical oscillation between symbolic speech and asymbolic extinction, between the speaking self and the integration into the Thing; he speaks, therefore he exists. When he does not speak, Endymion becomes opaque as "an excess of melancholic consciousness topples over into unconsciousness and he acquires the sharp loveliness of one lost to the present scene, transported ["alchemiz'd" (p. 128)] to some other place" (Swann, 2001, p. 22). When he is not marked by the symbolic, the melancholic tumbles into the realm of the asymbolic. Yet, speaking helps him unburden himself and cling to the present scene: "Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by / In tranced dullness; speak, and let that spell / Affright this lethargy" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 154). Spelling as in writing and naming the letters that form a word in a correct sequence and thus signify it in the symbolic register is meant to reinvigorate the melancholic sapped by the asymbolic. He seeks to withstand the "lethargic rays" of the black sun that pin him to the ground (Kristeva, 1989, p. 3). These lethargic rays of the black sun are lethal besides being jubilatory. The Greek etymology of the words "lethal" and "lethargy" both refer to forgetfulness (Lexico, 2021); Endymion is a "melancholy spirit" who hankers after "oblivion", forgetfulness (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 109); the Latin etymology of the word "oblivion" also points to the verb "to forget" (Lexico, 2021). Hence, the melancholic also yearns for dying and forgetting, deceasing and being forgotten. The inner threshold of despondency is between an "avenging death" and "a liberating death" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 4). From an exclusively symbolic point of view, death is avenging; however, according to the melancholic one's perspective, death is liberating. Endymion vacillates between the two. On one hand, he seems to be plunging into death; on the other hand, his devitalized being is occasionally fired by the effort he makes to prolong it. At this point of the narrative, he wants to be marked by Peona and thus to prolong his existence, occasionally though. As the quote above indicates, melancholy disconnects Endymion from the pleasing colours of heaven and earth, sunny glades and taintless rills. Deepest dungeons, pestilent light, upturned gills of dying fish and the fearful scarlet of the rose embody his dejection; as he is sorrowful, nature does not heal him.

In the little journey of an innocent bird, Endymion sees a "disguis'd demon, missioned to knit / My soul with under darkness" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 125). It is a demon of his mind fed by melancholy; the darkness of the underworld indicates the melancholic being's union with death, "the melancholy person's complicity with the world of darkness and despair" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 147). This demon entices him to stumble "down some monstrous precipice: / Therefore I [he] eager followed, and did curse / The disappointment" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 125). The melancholic desires to merge with sadness, "the fundamental mood of depression" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 21), thus eagerly follows the demon of dejection. He eagerly stumbles down a precipice; he is disappointed when he does not decease as he stumbles down the monstrous precipice, which demonstrates the melancholic one's desire for death. On the one hand, the depressed Endymion wishes to be united with sadness and death; on the other hand, the melancholic romance hero, who may be described as an orphan in the symbolic realm, wants to be soothed by symbolic structures such as time and narrative. He is like the Kristevan artist who is "consumed by melancholia" and who is "at the same time the most relentless in his struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets him" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 9).

Deprived of his primordial maternal nurse, Endymion says he has been lulled by a symbolic nurse: "Time, that aged nurse, / Rock'd me to patience" (Keats, 1818/1986, pp. 125-126); time as a symbolised form of timelessness comforts the melancholic Endymion for whom "time has been erased or bloated, absorbed into sorrow" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 4). Telling also comforts him:

> Now, thank gentle heaven!
> These things, with all their comfortings, are given
> To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,
> Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea
> Of weary life (Keats, 1818/1986, pp. 125-126).

All those things such as deepest dungeons and upturned gills of dying fish of his down-sunken sorrowful hours are not only deemed to be comforting as he merges with sadness but also found to be weary as he is crushed under their weight; he wishes to be soothed in his sister's bower. He is like an "udderless" lamb (p. 112), an infant without a mother who must be taken care of; he is like an uncoordinated infant "[f]rom languor's sullen bands, / His [whose] limbs are loos'd" (p. 135). He feels that his limbs are disorganised; his unarticulated limbs are suggestive of the inarticulate, aphasic melancholic, of the speechless infant. He feels that his canvas for the voyage of life is tattered, which leaves his bark bare (p.

127); that's why his bare boat stripped of its symbolic trappings sullenly drifts out of the symbolic realm (p. 127) as he has "been wandering in uncertain ways", counting "his woe-worn minutes" (p. 135); he feels layers of subjectivity are ripped off; he is disrobed of a symbolic garb as he retreats into Peona's bower.

For Endymion, grief is sweet, weary days offer "dreadful leisure" and melancholy is "gleaming" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 131; p. 139). This dreadful leisure is "made deeper exquisite, / By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night!"; he finds it "sickening" that anticipation makes "dreadful leisure" much deeper (p. 131). He seems to be torn between these feelings. He appears to be content about merging with sadness on the one hand, yet he is sickened on the other hand. The melancholic desires this state to continue as he would rather "be struck dumb, / Than speak against this ardent listlessness" (p. 129), while he also wants "the deadly yellow spleen" to be swept away (p. 131). Being struck dumb evokes asymbolic muteness; for the melancholic, "language is always foreign, never maternal"; for him, words are "detached from their drive base and marked with a deathly stillness" (Lechte, 1990, p. 186). His desire to be immersed in ardent listlessness is in accord with the melancholic withdrawal from life as he lacks motivation to engage in the symbolic domain. Nevertheless, he desires to be rid of this fatal spleen. He oscillates between the two.

Endymion is "coop'd up in the den / Of helpless discontent" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 131). A reflecting Endymion wows to take up a life of contemplation to ward off this "helpless discontent":

> I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed
> Sorrow the way to death; but patiently
> Bear up against it: so farewell, sad sigh;
> And come instead demurest meditation,
> To occupy me wholly, and to fashion
> My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.
> No more will I count over, link by link,
> My chain of grief: no longer to strive to find
> A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind
> Blustering about my ears (p. 133).

Endymion struggles to stand up against melancholy; he strives not to unite dejection with death. Instead he is resolved to maintain a life of reflection in order not to be beset by the melancholic oblivion. Similarly, he "sinks adown a solitary glen, / Where there was never sound of mortal men" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 135); he

broods “o’er the water in amaze” (p. 137); brooding puts him in a maze. He is frozen “to senseless stone” (p. 139) like the “marble man, / Frozen in that old tale Arabian” (p. 117). Once he dives into “the deep abyss” (p. 139), he goes through “winding passages, where sameness breeds / Vexing conceptions” (p. 140). His melancholy is marked by inward-looking “thoughts of self” and the “deadly feel of solitude” (p. 141). He is far from companionship in an “unknown time, surcharg’d with grief” (p. 141). In this “rapacious deep” (p. 142), the abyss of sorrow and incommunicable grief, the melancholic, disengaged from the realm of the symbolic, relapses to a narcissistic state. “Without the symbolic, the subject regresses, falling back into a realm where nothing is differentiated, so the self cannot separate itself from its heterogeneous surroundings” (McAfee, 2004, p. 63). Kristeva (1989) asserts that humans’ “gift of speech, of situating ourselves in time for an other, could exist nowhere except beyond the abyss” (p. 42). However, the abyss reclaims the melancholic; therefore, in such “a mournful place”, Endymion is “wayworn” (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 151). In the “swart abysm,” he is so “sad, so melancholy, so bereft” (p. 143; p. 152); the melancholic feels that he is bereft of something, deprived of an unnameable, of something unrepresentable. Hence, the melancholic Endymion feels he is disinherited of the Kristevan Thing that “does not lend itself to signification” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 13), the ungraspable, unnameable which resists articulation, the Keatsian “known Unknown” that defies signification (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 153).

Similar to the den of helpless discontent of Book I and the solitary glen of Book II, the “Cave of Quietude” (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 204) is of central importance in Book IV:

> There lives a den,
> Beyond the seeming confines of the space
> Made for the soul to wander in and trace
> Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
> Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
> Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
> One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
> Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart:
> And in these regions many a venom’d dart
> At random flies; they are the proper home
> Of every ill (p. 203).

This den beyond the confines of the symbolically designated space might be seen as the den of helpless discontent beyond the definable boundaries of the symbolic; the mind wanders in this den and unearths its own primordial existence, its "depth Cimmerian" (p. 199) and deepest "glooms"; in the dark regions of this den, the soul confronts its primeval fears, which causes more sadness; therefore, this den of the psyche is considered to be the source of anxieties. The melancholic feels wounded in this native hell as "a primitive self" feels "wounded, incomplete, and empty" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 12):

> the man is yet to come
> Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
> But few have ever felt how calm and well
> Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
> There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall:
> Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
> Yet all is still within and desolate.
> Beset with plainful gusts, within ye hear
> No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
> The death-watch tick is stifled (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 203).

This native hell is characterised by an impression of bleak emptiness and despondency. In this den, anguish does not sting because the melancholic is frozen; woe beats at the gate of the den; gusts seem to be left outside of the den, yet new-born woes beset the melancholic who has merged with sadness. The death-watch tick is stifled as the melancholic has already merged with death. Hence, this state is called "Happy gloom!" and "Dark paradise!" (p. 204); death does not frighten the melancholic as he is already fatally frozen, dead-still; it sounds like Nerval's soleil noir; it is a dark paradise without representation; it is the maternal paradise unrepresented by the symbolic, "the non-integrated self's lost paradise, one without others or limits, a fantasy of untouchable fullness" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 20). This Kristevan "insistence without presence, a light without representation" (p. 13) is more intense than Young Semele's "maternal longing":

> Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
> Then it is free to him; and from an urn,
> Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught –
> Young Semele such richness never quaft
> In her maternal longing! (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 204).

Semele is Dionysus's mortal mother impregnated by Zeus. Steinhoff (1987) notes that "Pregnant with Bacchus by Jove, she asked for and received Jove's lethal lightning stroke" (p. 247). The melancholic sufferer burns like Semele struck by fatal lightning and consumed in lightning-ignited flame. The melancholic is similar to the pregnant maternal body, "the threshold of culture and nature" and "a being of folds" (Kristeva, 1987, pp. 259-260). Therefore, Endymion's experience of primal fusion in the maternal cave of speechlessness (infancy) is likened to Semele's pregnancy. The maternal womb and the paternal light are enfolded into one figure; that is why his melancholy is a light in the dark, a soleil noir.

This den of helpless discontent is characterised by the "silence dreariest [which] / Is most articulate" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 204); the mute melancholic is wrested away from the symbolic realm; therefore, this dark paradise lacks light to represent it; it is not articulated in the symbolic. This den is like a cave where "those eyes are the brightest far that keep / Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep" (p. 204). Similar to "the foetal subject" in the Kristevan maternal chora (Payne, 1993, p. 169), he sleeps in the maternal cave; once it is weaned, its eyes will be dazzled like those of Semele. Since the foetal melancholic resides in the uterine night, his light is dark. No matter how dark and dreary it is, the melancholic desires to cling to it:

> O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
> Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
> In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
> For, never since they griefs and woes began,
> Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
> Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 204).

The grieving and woeful melancholic retreats into the Cave of Quietude, withdrawing from life, from the symbolic. The Cave of Quietude is "a kind of Keatsian Center of Indifference" (Sperry, 1994, p. 110), where, from a Kristevan point of view, the difference between self and other is obliterated; the melancholic's indifference, his lack of interest could be seen as a consequence of the extermination of the difference between subject and object, here and there, now and then. The melancholic Endymion tumbles down into "the blankness of asymbolia or the excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos" in this maternal cave (Kristeva, 1989, p. 33). In this cave, he is, in the words of Kristeva, "without objects" and "glued to the Thing" (p. 51). Nevertheless, the wondrous human psyche is "pregnant with such a den" as the quotation above shows, and he is likened to Semele impregnated

by Zeus and pregnant with Dionysus. This realm of beings enfolded into one another is expected to produce offspring; this will be the poetic romance of Endymion for the Keatsian poetic voice that is enwombed in the maternal cave. Like Semele giving birth to Dionysus (maternal conception), the Keatsian poetic spirit also gives birth to a Dionysian romance (paternal conception), a Bacchic Endymion which is not predominantly marked by Apollonian clear distinctions, outlines and impermeable boundaries, but which is characterised by Dionysian folds, overlaps, intermixture and interlacements. Therefore, this Dionysian romance ends and recommences with Endymion's sister Peona who is, in the last line of Endymion, seen going home "through the gloomy wood in wonderment" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 216). The romance continues to be a preverbal space, a presymbolic register for Peona. The last line of the romance shows that there is only one way to go home and that is through the gloomy wood in wonderment, that is through the unsignifiable and the unrepresentable.

The romance ends with Peona journeying into the wood, while the melancholic Endymion leaves the scene with the Indian Maid; the young "hermit" of the maternal cave (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 212) meets with the "dark-eyed stranger" who changes, "[t]o Endymion's amaze", into "Cynthia bright", and they "vanished far away" (p. 216). His encounter with the Indian Maid is also important in the discussion of Endymion's melancholy. As opposed to the elusive form of Cynthia produced by the psyche of an inward-looking, internally speculating Endymion, the corporeal Indian maid offers Endymion an opportunity to step out of the swart abysm of melancholy and moor his self to the existence of an other: "My Indian bliss! / My river-lily bud! One human kiss! / One sigh of real breath – one gentle squeeze [...] warm with dew at ooze from living blood!" (p. 207). Endymion renounces his quest for Cynthia; he feels "the solid ground" (p. 206):

> I have clung
> To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
> Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
> Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
> Against all elements, against the tie
> Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
> Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
> Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
> Has my own soul conspired: so my story
> Will I to children utter, and repent.

There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here,
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing: gone and past
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewel!
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
Adieu, my daintiest Dream! (pp. 206-207).

Endymion bids farewell to Cynthia, an unlocatable "shape-shifting goddess" (Bari, 2012, p. 88), an elusive dream, his "daintiest Dream", the Kristevan Thing that resists signification. The melancholic, disengaged from the realm of the symbolic's subject-object distinction, comes to realise that he has loved a nothing, clung to a nothing. The melancholic has been presumptuous against love, not observing the limits of what is permitted within the confines of the symbolic. He comes to see that mortals (that are linguistic subjects inhabiting the symbolic domain) are tied to each other, that the self is anchored to the existence of an other. He has bent his appetite beyond his natural sphere, regressing from the symbolic and returning to a narcissistic state, as a result of which he has starved and died, like "dead-born / From the old womb of night" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 199). However, the Indian maid redeems him; he departs from lone presymbolic caverns where he is in pursuit of the maternal Thing which is not "a separate object in the world that faces me, but a devouring attachment to what refuses signification" (Keltner, 2011, p. 53). Therefore, cloudy phantasms are discarded; the monstrous swell of visionary seas is repudiated; he is resolved not to be entangled by wonder. Dreams will encumber him no more (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 207). He goes on to imagine their earthly dwelling: "Still let me speak; / Still let me dive into the joy I seek, - / For yet the past doth imprison me" (p. 208); he wishes to continue to speak within the symbolic realm as he dreads being devoured by the narcissistic self; thus, he strives "to clear / His briar'd path to some tranquillity" (p. 209).

Bacchus is an antidote to the melancholy of the "mournful wanderer" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 200). The Indian maid sings a roundelay; in her song she blames Sorrow for borrowing "[t]he natural hue of health from vermeil lips", "[t]he lustrous passion from a falcon eye", "[t]he mellow ditties from a mourning tongue" and

"[h]eart's lightness from the merriment of May" (pp. 193-194). Dionysian revellers are seen as an antidote to sorrow:

> And as I sat, over the light blue hills
> There came a noise of revellers: the rills
> Into the wide stream came of purple hue –
> 'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
> The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
> From kissing cymbals made a merry din –
> 'Twas Bacchus and his kin! (p. 194).

Bacchus's revellers are crowned with green leaves and their faces are all on flame; they madly dance and scare melancholy away; they rush into folly (p. 195). Bacchus is in dancing mood, trifling his ivy dart. His female followers are merry and gleeful in their "wild minstrelsy" (p. 195); "jolly Satyrs" too follow Bacchus, "Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth," and join "mad minstrelsy" (pp. 195-196).

To explain the relation between melancholy and Bacchic joy, Kristeva (1989) refers to Aristotle and his reliance on the notion of four humours and temperaments. According to the Greek conception, "spermatic froth" is "the euphoric counterpoint to black bile"; Kristeva notes that Aristotle makes "explicit references to Dionysus and Aphrodite"; she also adds that Aristotle considers that melancholy is not "a philosopher's disease but his very nature, his ethos" (pp. 6-7). From this perspective, melancholy characterises a contemplative Endymion who thinks until his head is "dizzy and distraught", a ruminating hero who holds "his forehead, to keep off the burr / Of smothering fancies" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 122; p. 137). Drawing on Kristeva's references to Aristotle, we could see Endymion's encounter with the Indian Maid as the meeting of the black bile and the spermatic froth. Endymion yields to the Indian Maid:

> Poor Lady, how thus long
> Have I been able to endure that voice?
> Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
> I must be thy servant evermore:
> I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
> Alas, I must not think – by Phoebe, no!
> Let me not think, soft Angel! (p. 197).

Endymion bows to the Dionysian impulse realised in the person of the Indian maid. He wishes to be stripped of the Apollonian impulse.

Apollo represents "the drive toward distinction, discreteness and individuality, toward the drawing and respecting of boundaries and limits" whereas Dionysus embodies "the drive towards the transgression of limits, the dissolution of boundaries, the destruction of individuality, and excess" (Geuss, 2006, p. xi). The Dionysian impulse is "associated with intoxication" while the Apollonian impulse evokes dreams (Faflak, 2008, p. 70). Endymion portrays the encounter between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian and the Apollonian are "inseparable modalities at the level of experience, just as the semiotic and the Symbolic coexist within the same signifying process" (Faflak, 2008, p. 70). Endymion wants the Indian Maid to foster him "beyond the brink / Of recollection" unlike an Apollonian man who "represents conscious forces of logic and rationality, order and control" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 103). He desires his Apollonian side to be killed: "Do gently murder half my soul, and I / Shall feel the other half so utterly!" (Keats, 1818/1986, pp. 197-198). He wants the rational side to perish so that he could feel the Dionysian side, "unconscious forces of instinct and passion, individualism and excess" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 103). He is giddy (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 198), intoxicated by the Dionysian spirit.

A Narcissan Endymion in the Nocturnal Old Womb of Melancholy

As a melancholy person, Endymion gives "the impression of having vacated this world" (Swann, 2001, p. 21). He is disaffiliated from the symbolic realm, for "an over-intensity in the subliminal self" results in desolation and melancholy (Beer, 2003, p. 62). This subliminal self (the self that falls beyond the symbolic limit) retreats into the pre-linguistic realm where he is fused with the primordial mother. He is disconnected from the social realm. He is not associated with a companion; in other words, he is not engaged with an other in the symbolic realm which is predicated upon the distinction between self and other.

Kristeva's metaphor of soleil noir is important in the discussion of melancholy in Endymion. The Kristevan glaring black sun of melancholy is rendered as gleaming melancholy in Endymion. For Endymion, Eros is "Dear unseen light in darkness! Eclipser / Of light in light!" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 188). This description of Eros evokes Kristeva's use of the metaphor of the black sun. The Kristevan black sun is described as a light without representation like the Keatsian "unseen light in darkness" (p. 188). Kristeva (1989) proposes that the maternal

Thing is “an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time” (p. 13). Kristeva speaks of this primal Thing as “being the ‘something’ that, seen by the already constituted subject looking back, appears as the unspecified, the unseparated, the elusive” (p. 262). Similarly, the Keatsian Thing is unspecified and unseparated as light is eclipsed by light. This Kristevan black sun is “glaring and inescapable” (p. 3), like Endymion marked by “Dark, nor light, / The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly, / But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy” (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 139). This Keatsian shimmering melancholy chimes with the Kristevan sun, bright and black at the same time. This Kristevan black sun, by the same token, resonates with the Keatsian sun, paradoxically bright and dark at once.

Disinherited of the Thing, the despondent Endymion wanders in pursuit of continuously disappointing adventures (into the subterranean and submarine - subliminal - realms) and loves (his encounters with Cynthia and the Indian Maid), and retreats into the “Cave of Quietude” (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 204), disconsolate and aphasic, alone with the archaic, unnamed Thing in “the old womb of night” (IV. 372), where the black sun is a “source of dazzling light” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 151). The black sun not only casts light on the poet, but also blinds him, depriving him of sight in the Cave of Quietude, where he merges with the unrepresentable Thing.

Kristeva (1989) claims that the narcissist melancholic mourns not an object but the unnameable Thing (p. 13). According to Kristeva, the melancholic appears to have been deprived of “an unnameable, supreme good, of something unrepresentable” (p. 13), like an unseen light in darkness. For the melancholic, it is impossible for an erotic object to replace the irreplaceable primordial preobject. Endymion, embarking on a quest for the irreplaceable maternal Thing, wanders through the subterranean realm and the submarine world. His melancholic sadness is unsymbolizable, unnameable; therefore, he hears the voice of the maternal body in the person of Cynthia in his inner consciousness (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 188). Accordingly, she is not symbolised as an external object or by an external referent; no word could signify the Thing; “no outside agent can be used as referent” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 12). Hence, Cynthia is also seen as a preobject, not only as an erotic object belonging to the realm of the symbolic.

Melancholy evokes the image of an introspective Endymion in a pensive mood. Endymion as a Kristevan Narcissus is a melancholy being without an object; an inward-looking Endymion suggests the Narcissan “internalization of reflection” (Kristeva, 1987, p. 115). Endymion’s Narcissan “speculative internality” could be

described, in the words of Kristeva, as "the dank, swampy, wastelands of human experience" (p. 115), "the marshy land of the Narcissus myth" (1989, p. 5). Narcissus, who has no other external object other than his image, his reflection, represents the internalization of reflection, contemplation. A specular Narcissus turns into a speculating one, into Endymion who "bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow, / And twang'd it inwardly" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 212): a "reflexive, specular, speculative, and intimist" Narcissan Endymion (Kristeva, 1987, p. 122). An inward-looking Endymion contemplates inwardly in his mind; a ruminating Endymion will live like a "hermit young" in a "mossy cave" in the dank, swampy wastelands of his universe (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 212). His "contemplative internality" (Kristeva, 1987, p. 116) is marked by "pomp of solitude" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 215). His seclusion in this contemplative interiority points to a Narcissan Endymion from whose gaze Cynthia vanished as he "brooded o'er the water in amaze" (p. 137). Thinking in a maze points to his being immersed in his swampy mindscape embodied as the maternal cave of quietude.

The Narcissan Endymion should be considered in two aspects within the Kristevan universe. Kristeva (1989) puts forward that "loss, bereavement, and absence trigger the work of the imagination and nourish it permanently as much as they threaten it and spoil it" (p. 9). Loss opens up space for the imagination to flourish as much as it leaves one "fancy-sick" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 129). On the one hand, the narcissistic melancholic is in a maze that stands for the Kristevan marshy wasteland since it does not incorporate the divide between self and other. On the other hand, a Narcissan Endymion, who could be figuratively said to have a specular identification with his reflection over the water, which is a mirage, is endowed with a psychic interiority in which he could reflect upon himself and contemplate the universe. This understanding of the myth of Narcissus makes "inner space the reflection of an alterego" (Kristeva, 1987, p. 59). The former refers to the first meaning of the verb "reflect" as in a mirror sending back an image, while the latter points to its second meaning as in thinking deeply. Accordingly, the depressed narcissist who looks at his image over the water is also a speculating and theorising thinker, for the Latin etymology of the verb "speculate" is "to look," and the Greek root of the word "theory" refers to speculation and contemplation (Lexico, 2021).

In the "subjective internality" of the brooding melancholic (Kristeva, 1987, p. 123), Endymion "inwardly began / On things for which no wording can be found; / Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd / Beyond the reach of music" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 215). The melancholic that broods in a maze and feels beyond "the reach of music" is like the "feather'd lyrist [a cupid] that is "brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre" (p. 145). The winged lyrist is steeped in the asymbolic language of music and rhythm, in the semiotic realm where the inflection of the maternal voice is faintly heard. The Narcissan Endymion is not only drowned in the unsignifiable, but also he is provided with a psychic interiority. Such ruminative internality endows the melancholic person with psychic space, which is embodied by the "Cave of Quietude" that Endymion retreats into (p. 204). Accordingly, Kristeva (1989) claims that "[w]ithout a bent for melancholia there is no psyche" (p. 4). Melancholy provides the depressed person with a place for observation, a psychic temple where the melancholic subject could contemplate, as the Latin etymology of "contemplate" refers to a place for observation (Lexico, 2021); the melancholic contemplates in his temple.

The speculative space of such psychic internality cannot be articulated through symbolic forms of grammar and structures; no word could signify the archaic Thing. The "reflective closure" of this psychic space (Kristeva, 1987, p. 117) cannot be fully expressed through music and rhythm, either; the melancholic sinks deeper and deeper into the Kristevan Thing "in a sort of deathful glee" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 215). Since melancholy is described as gleaming within the Keatsian universe, death is portrayed as gleeful, too. Being steeped in the incommunicable Thing that is "inscribed within us without memory", Endymion merges with "the buried accomplice of our unspeakable anguishes" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 14). This jubilatory merging is marked by "the delights of reunion" as much as it is portrayed as lethal, presented as "the nuptials of suicide" (p. 14). To be glued to the archaic Thing could be an immersion in either a joyful "oceanic void" or a "lethal ocean" (pp. 29-30).

The Kristevan Narcissus is not simply a youth admiring himself "in a mirage"; Kristeva argues that melancholy is "the hidden face of Narcissus, the face that is to bear him away into death" (p. 5). Endymion, who is ready at any moment for a plunge into death, resembles Kristeva's Narcissus who lives in another dimension. Nor secured to an object, his anguish returns, and when he realizes through that rebound that the other in the spring is merely himself, he has put together a

psychic space – he has become subject. Subject of what? Subject of the reflection and at the same time subject of death. Narcissus is not located in the objectal or sexual dimension. He does not love youths of either sex, he loves neither women nor men. He Loves, he loves Himself – active and passive, subject and object. Actually, Narcissus is not completely without object. The object of Narcissus is psychic space; it is representation itself, fantasy. But he does not know it, and he dies (Kristeva, 1987, p. 116).

Not being attached to an object, Endymion strives "by fancies vain and crude" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 209), is located in the Cave of Quietude, the psychic space, where the lids of the eyes are "shut longest in a dreamless sleep" (p. 204), where the melancholic unites with the maternal Thing and death since melancholy corresponds to union with the mother and death.

A union with the mother and death suggests that melancholy is "a living death" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 4). Once bereft of the Indian maid, his "[c]ompanion fair" (Keats, 1818/1986, p. 213), Endymion takes a vow of chastity, remains without an object "as he a corpse had been / All the long day" (p. 214). In the words of Kristeva, Endymion lives a life in death and his flesh is wounded, bleeding, cadaverized, my [his] rhythm slowed down or interrupted, time has been erased or bloated, absorbed into sorrow … Absent from other people's meaning, alien, accidental with respect to naïve happiness. I [he] owe[s] a supreme, metaphysical lucidity to my depression. On the frontiers of life and death, occasionally I have [he has] the arrogant feeling of being witness to the meaninglessness of Being, of revealing the absurdity of bonds and beings (Kristeva, 1989, p. 4).

Like a corpse, he falls from the symbolic; like a cadaver falling from the symbolic realm of life and meaning, he relapses into the pre-linguistic realm where he rejoices in the poetic cadences of the asymbolic, jubilatory and lethal at once, voluptuous and sad at the same time, verging on the frontiers of life and death, "a borderline case" (Kristeva, 1987, p. 115). Both "cadaver" and "cadence" derive from the Latin word *cadere* that means "to fall" (Lexico, 2021). The fusion with the archaic Thing leads to a downfall that carries him along into the incommunicable and the unnameable. In the realm of the inexpressible Thing, symbolic time has been eradicated: "the alien, retarded, or vanishing speech of melancholy persons leads them to live within a skewed time sense"; this awry sense of time "does not

pass by, the before/after notion does not rule it" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 60). For the melancholic, time is not defined by symbolic timely indicators such as past, present and future. In addition to the erasure of time, the melancholic speech is characterised by linguistic retardation. However, this deceleration in the production of speech is also accompanied by "an accelerated, creative cognitive process"; their language shows "hyperactivity with signifiers" that "reveals itself particularly by connecting distant semantic fields"; their speech is marked by "associative originality" and "cognitive hyperlucidity"; inventive and original associations "destabilise the subject and afford it an escape route away from confrontation with a stable signification or a steady object"; this hyperlucidity, not holding the melancholic subject within the semantic field of a signifier, allows him/her to invent strangely semanticised, polyvalent words (p. 59).

Endymion, affected by shimmering melancholy, has his moments of lucidity, his moments of luminosity in the old womb of night. These twilit moments are adumbrated in poetic cadences; his attachment to the unnameable Thing is rendered almost intelligible. The melancholic person's despondent voluptuousness and dispirited intoxication are lucidly expressed with a fleeting clear-mindedness. Therefore, death is voluptuously thought or considered to perversely delicious as it heralds the fusion with the Thing as well as the dissolution of the speaking subject. The reuniting with the archaic Thing is both lethal and euphoric. This tendency towards disintegration as an expression of the death drive is exuberantly fatal. Dying is perversely delicious for the melancholic because dying leads to merging with sadness and being incorporated into the ineffable love that is never attained, always somewhere else. The death of the linguistic subject in the maternal cave of speechlessness testifies to this.

Conclusion

To conclude, the melancholic Endymion withdraws from the symbolic and retreats into the realm of the unsignifiable Thing where self and other are undifferentiated. This paper argues that the Keatsian invisible light in the dark resonates with the Kristevan black sun. It has further asserted that the introspective Endymion evokes the Kristevan Narcissus; it has argued that the immersion in the primordial Thing is jubilatory as well as deathly. Endymion is portrayed as a melancholy being who has a yearning for oblivion. He is also cooped up in the preverbal den of discontent. In this pre-symbolic den, he encounters the unnameable maternal Thing. Similar to this pre-linguistic den, the Cave of Quietude has been seen as a space beyond the

boundaries of the symbolic. In this cave of speechless infancy, the melancholic Endymion merges with the maternal Thing. Eventually, he comes across the Indian Maid who sings in the company of the Dionysian revellers. This Bacchic encounter has been thought as antidote to his melancholy. It has been put forward that melancholy in *Endymion* evokes the Kristevan black sun of melancholy. This Kristevan melancholy as a light without representation chimes with the Keatsian unseen light in darkness. Keats's gleaming melancholy is similar to the Kristevan sun of melancholy, bright and black at the same time. This black sun is the unseen light in the nocturnal old womb of melancholy. In this uterine night, Endymion is without an object since this night refers to a pre-linguistic realm where the melancholic merges with the maternal Thing and therefore the distinction between self and other is not recognised. Hence, Endymion has been discussed as a Kristevan Narcissus, a melancholy being without an object. In this realm, we see the Narcissan Endymion endowed with a psychic interiority; the melancholic narcissist contemplates in this psychic temple.

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Summary

This article focuses on how the Kristevan melancholy permeates John Keats' *Endymion*. The melancholic Endymion, whom a feeling of pensive sadness surrounds, withdraws from the symbolic and retreats into the realm of the unsignifiable Thing where self and other are undifferentiated. This study asserts that the melancholic Endymion relapses into the realm of the symbiotic fusion with the Kristevan maternal Thing and therefore withdraws from the symbolic domain of the linguistic sign. When he is not marked by the symbolic register, the melancholic tumbles into the realm of the asymbolic. This paper also shows how the Keatsian invisible light in the dark resonates with the Kristevan black sun. This article further contends that the introspective Endymion evokes the Kristevan Narcissus; it argues that the immersion in the primordial Thing is jubilatory as well as deathly. Being immersed in the Kristevan maternal Thing, described by Kristeva as "the centre of attraction and repulsion," is alluring and repulsive at once (1989, p.13). Melancholy pervades Keats's poetic romance. Endymion is portrayed as a "melancholy spirit" who has a yearning for

"oblivion" (Keats, 1818/1986, I. 98-9). He is also cooped up in the preverbal "den of helpless discontent" (I. 928-9). In this pre-symbolic den, he encounters the unnameable maternal Thing. A ruminating Endymion wows to take up a life of contemplation to ward off his helpless discontent. He is resolved to maintain a life of reflection in order not to be beset by the melancholic oblivion. Similar to this pre-linguistic den, the Cave of Quietude has been seen as a space beyond the boundaries of the symbolic; the mind wanders in this den and unearths its own primordial existence, its "depth Cimmerian" (IV. 375). In this cave of speechless infancy, the melancholic Endymion merges with the maternal Thing. This cave of quietude could be seen as a place of indifference, where, from a Kristevan perspective, the difference between self and other is obliterated; the melancholic's indifference, his lack of interest may be seen as a consequence of the extermination of the difference between subject and object, here and there, now and then. The melancholic Endymion sinks into "the blankness of asymbolia or the excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos" in this maternal cave (Kristeva, 1989, p. 33). In this cave, he is, in the words of Kristeva, "without objects" and "glued to the Thing" (p. 51). Eventually, he comes across the Indian Maid who sings in the company of the Dionysian revellers; this Bacchic encounter has been thought as antidote to his melancholy. The Indian Maid redeems him; he departs from lone presymbolic caverns where he is in pursuit of the maternal Thing which is not "a separate object in the world that faces me, but a devouring attachment to what refuses signification" (Keltner, 2011, p. 53). Melancholy in *Endymion* evokes the Kristevan black sun of melancholy. This Kristevan melancholy as a light without representation chimes with the Keatsian "unseen light in darkness" (Keats, 1818/1986, III. 986). It sounds like Nerval's *soleil noir*; it is a dark paradise without symbolic representation; it is the maternal paradise unsymbolised; it is "the non-integrated self's lost paradise, one without others or limits, a fantasy of untouchable fullness" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 20). Keats's gleaming melancholy is similar to the Kristevan sun of melancholy, bright and black at the same time. This black sun is the unseen light in the nocturnal old womb of melancholy. In this uterine night, Endymion is without an object since this night refers to a pre-linguistic realm where the melancholic merges with the maternal Thing and therefore the distinction between self and other is not recognised. Hence, Endymion is discussed as a Kristevan Narcissus, a melancholy being without an object. Kristeva maintains that the narcissist melancholic mourns not an object but the ineffable Thing; the melancholic appears to have been deprived of "an unnameable, supreme good, of something unrepresentable" (p. 13). For the melancholic, it is impossible for an erotic object to replace the irreplaceable primordial preobject. Endymion, embarking on a quest for the irreplaceable maternal Thing, wanders through the subterranean realm and the submarine world; his melancholia is unsymbolisable. In this asymbolic realm, we see the Narcissan Endymion endowed with a psychic interiority; the melancholic narcissist contemplates in this psychic temple. Melancholy provides the depressed person with a place for observation, a psychic temple where the melancholic subject reflects about himself and the world. The jubilatory merging with the maternal Thing in the translinguistic cave is characterise by "the delights of union" as much as it is portrayed as lethal, described as "the nuptials of suicide" (p. 14). To be tied to the archaic, unsymbolisable Thing is an immersion in not only a joyful "oceanic void" but also a "lethal ocean" (pp. 29-30).