

## JENNIFER WAWRZINEK: WOUNDING THE TISSUE OF THE TEXT IN KEATS'S *FALL OF HYPERION*

### EARLY MODERN LITERATURE FORUM

The Early Modern Literature Forum is an opportunity for those working in English and European literature and drama, 1500-1800, or in adjacent periods or fields, to share research and discuss texts and issues of common interest.

Date: Friday 29 May, 2015  
Time: 4:00pm - 6:00pm  
Location: Room 202A,  
Learning and Innovation Building (17)  
Convenors: Kenneth Chong, Brandon Chua &  
Spencer Jackson  
<http://uqche.hass.uq.edu.au>



Image: A Glacier cave on Perito Moreno Glacier, in Los Glaciares National Park, southern Argentina, Martin St-Amant (2010)

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### WOUNDING THE TISSUE OF THE TEXT IN KEATS'S *FALL OF HYPERION*

The poetry of John Keats is widely noted for its intense sensuality and material richness, perhaps to some extent influenced by his time at Guy's Hospital when he was a medical student between 1810 and 1816. Yet Keats is also famous for his now oft-quoted phrase 'negative capability', which instates an ethical relation towards radical alterity in such a way as to resist the appropriation, control or mastery of otherness. The very idea of negative capability as being in mystery and uncertainty would seem to resist the kinds of knowledge/s inscribed in the material advancement of medicine and scientific discovery. In this sense, then, how do these two seemingly contradictory modes of relation work together in order to articulate the kind of epistemological and ontological awareness suggested by Keats's description of intelligence as prior to any identity, yet intrinsically material in that it has the power to irritate, unsettle, cleanse and heal?

In this paper I will examine the dual situating of radical alterity (or, in Keatsian terms, of 'negative capability') and a materiality that is pushed to its end limit (or what I am calling 'radical materiality') as a textual process that produces the accidents it receives through a self-engendered decreation as an intrinsic textual plasticity. By focusing on Keats's last unfinished epic poem, entitled *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, I will examine the idea of a textual form that inheres an alterity which is both other than the same and other to otherness itself. It is in *The Fall* that plasticity finds its apotheosis as a full working through of language emptied of content such that it is no longer a

tool but rather pure mediality. In my examination of the *The Fall* I will analyse the way in which the process of crystallisation and the reduction of language to pure mediality enacts a wounding in the tissue of the text. This in fact shifts the focus on transmutation from one that is enacted via processes of cutting or splicing (from an external source) to one of eruption or emission from within the text. The event of emergence thus becomes self-engendered, although not in a way that would (re)confirm the self, but rather in the form of the supplement, that is, as an emergence from a textual wounding that remains both external and internal to the wound.

JENNIFER WAWRZINEK is Junior Professor in British Romanticism at the English Institute, Freie Universität Berlin. She is the author of *Ambiguous Subjects: Dissolution and Metamorphosis in the Post-modern Sublime* (Rodopi 2008) and co-editor of the essay collection *Negotiating Afropolitanism* (Rodopi 2011), which won the ABS 2013 Bronze Book Award. She has been a British Academy Visting Fellow (University of London, 2012) and is currently Australia Research Council Distinguished International Visiting Fellow at the History of Emotions Research Group, University of Melbourne. She is in the final stages of completing her latest monograph, *Beyond Identity: Decreation and British Romanticism*.