

"A Sick Eagle" and "I am": Hymns to Sculpture by Keats and Rilke

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Volume 24 Issue 2 (March 2022) Article 10**Ya-feng WU,****"'A Sick Eagle' and 'I Am': Hymns to Sculpture by Keats and Rilke"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol24/iss2/10>>Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 24.2 (2022)**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol24/iss2/>>

Abstract: At the turn of eighteenth and nineteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sculpture came to serve as an emblem of humanity's response to the challenges of the times. John Keats and Rainer Maria Rilke, felt compelled at their encounters with ancient Greek sculpture in the museum to reflect upon their vocation in an age disrupted by political upheaval and rampant commercialization respectively. Keats's sonnet, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" (1817), registers an intimation of his latent grandeur in the form of a "sick eagle," confronting "a shadow of a magnitude." To overcome this experience, Keats made attempts at epic on the theme of Hyperion (1819-20). His dyad Hyperion-Apollo represents skepticism about the new order which was yet to emerge in the post-Napoleonic era. One century away, these marbles inspired Auguste Rodin. Rodin's works exert a great influence on Rilke. Rilke's endeavor shows in "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" (1904) and culminates in the "Sonnets to Orpheus" (1923). Rilke's trio, Orpheus-Eurydice-Hermes, embodies his solution to the anxiety provoked by alienation in an age of commodification. The exhortation in the Sonnets to declare "I am" crystalizes Rilke's recognition of human participation in the elemental transformation. This essay illustrates how the encounters with sculpture help them fashion their self-image to both represent and withstand the challenges of the times.

Ya-feng WU

"A Sick Eagle' and 'I Am': Hymns to Sculpture by Keats and Rilke"

At the turn of eighteenth and nineteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sculpture comes to be regarded as an emblem of humanity's response to the challenges of the times. The two poets, John Keats and Rainer Maria Rilke, felt compelled at their encounters with ancient Greek sculpture in the museum to reflect upon their vocation in an age disrupted by political upheaval and rampant commercialization respectively.

Since the second half of the eighteenth century, sculpture has served as a crucial factor in the evaluation of classical art. Johann Gottfried Herder considers sculpture superior to painting for "sculpture does not possess a viewpoint: it explores everything in the dark, following the shape of limbs and forms" (Herder 93). The technical requirements of sculpture also facilitate transcendence beyond its material basis, as Herder explains, "it is not the hand but the spirit, the trembling fervor of the imagination, that is here gathered into a unity" (93). This high regard of sculpture registers a larger tendency of idealizing ancient Greek culture, or Hellenism, which as Gillen Wood points out has become "a cipher of modernity itself and its pathologies" (Wood, *The Shock* 124). Romantic Hellenism marks the transition between two modes of approaches to ancient art: the sentimental idealization and the accommodation of the real. The second is ushered in with the display of Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum in 1816 (132). The materiality of ancient sculpture, often accentuated by fragmentation, elicits affective response and philosophical reflection. The focus on ancient sculpture of the human figure crystalizes the search for the place of human beings amidst the grand currents of history and the universe.

The appreciation of fragmented ancient sculpture accompanied and contributed to "the taste for fragments," which was a popular literary craze that came to be satirized by Francis Jeffrey in *The Edinburgh Review* (Jeffrey 1813). Marjorie Levinson traces the "origin" of the Romantic Fragment Poem to Friedrich Schlegel's aphorism: "Many of the works of the ancient have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written" (Levinson 164). In other words, the Romantic Fragment Poem is fabricated in emulation of those products of time. Schlegel further elevates this mode to an epistemological approach to poetry: "The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; . . . that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected" (qtd. in Levinson 175). Anne Janowitz puts it plainly that this mode of writing is a protest against the *ancien régime* of genre (Janowitz 447), a literary way of disrupting the establishment in correspondence with the French Revolution. This essay examines the appeals of fragment as leverage to investigate the development of the poesis and the poet's self-image. On the one hand, Keats's failure to envisage an Apollo for the emerging new order suggests his resistance to the imperialist ideology of appropriating antiquity. On the other, Rilke's affirmation of elemental dissolution of the human body presents a counteraction to the atomizing tendency of capitalist society. Their artistic strategies of coping with modern predicaments stem from their encounters with ancient sculpture in the museum.

Meeting Antiquity in the Museum

At the turn of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, classical sculpture was enmeshed in a debate on the relationship between art and cultural authority. As Elizabeth Prettejohn points out, the establishment of *Musée Napoleon* in 1797 with the spoils from Greece and Egypt accelerated a competition between many countries to hold on to classical inheritance as a guarantee of their legitimacy. Parthenon sculptures became such a foci of contention (Prettejohn 43). Ironically, with their peculiar material condition and the dubious circumstance of acquisition Parthenon sculptures destabilized the then prevalent Neoclassical doctrine (56), on which most European regimes relied on as the symbol of authority.

This essay maintains that this paradigm shift was already suggested in Joachim Johann Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* (1764). Winckelmann provides the foundation for Neoclassicism, which according to Friedrich Schiller describes a "sentimental" longing for the forever lost "naïve" ancient Greek civilization (qtd. in Wood, *The Shock* 122). The lack of access to the Greek originals all the more impels Winckelmann to idealize Greek art through copies, prints, and drawings, etc. Gillen Wood contends that Winckelmann conforms to the model of Schiller's sentimental poet who is in love with "the idea of antiquity," rather than its "material reality" (123). However, I would argue Winckelmann's art history contains more than doctrines of idealization and harmony. He upholds the immortal serenity of the Apollo in the Belvedere, "an eternal springtime, like that of the blissful Elysian

Fields, . . . for here there is nothing mortal, nothing that betokens miserable humanity. No veins or sinews heat and move this body, but rather a heavenly spirit that, flowing like a gentle stream, has saturated, as it were, every contour of this figure" (Winckelmann, *History* 333). Apollo thus embodies the eternal spring. But his exaltation of the Torso of Herakles in the Belvedere betrays nothing less than a material fascination with antique sculpture:

I cannot look at the small portion of the left shoulder which is still visible, without calling to mind that upon its outstretched strength, as upon two mountains, the whole burden of the circles of the heavens has rested. . . . As in a swelling movement of the sea the previously smooth surface sprouts with a vague unrest into rippling waves, . . . does the one muscle pass into the other, . . . At this moment my spirit traverses the remotest regions of the earth through which Hercules passed, . . . I see here the principal edifice of the bones of this body, the origin of the muscles, . . . It seems to me as if the back, which appears bent in lofty contemplations, formed a head which is busy with glad remembrances of his amazing deeds; . . . the other missing limbs begin to take form in my thought; an efflux from what is before me gathers, and produces, as it were, a sudden restoration. . . . (Winckelmann, "Description" 188-89)

Winckelmann's kinetic and spiritual engagement with the sculpture is heightened and conditioned by its fragmentation. The fragment transports him to the terrain where the sculpture takes shape. The viewer is likewise challenged to prove themselves worthy of such grandeur. This aspiration to become equal to the supreme artwork constitutes the moral note of appreciating ancient culture. Furthermore, its loss of contour enables the surface to take on the "swelling" movement of the sea and the "sprout[ing]" vitality is set free to flow from one part to another with a "vague unrest." As the back morphs into a head, the viewer absorbs the moral elevation. The "efflux" of energy eventually forms a "sudden restoration" in the viewer's mind. Winckelmann's ecstasy on the torso, characterized by the three phases—astonishment, competition, and restoration—anticipates the response of Keats and Rilke. Furthermore, Winckelmann reminds us that the Belvedere Torso appears to be one of the last perfect works that were produced in Greece before its loss of freedom (Winckelmann, *History* 323). For him, art provides an index to the political and cultural condition in which it is produced.

Jacques Rancière in *Aisthesis* acknowledges Winckelmann as occupying the turning point of modern history "when art becomes Art not by cutting itself from society but by giving itself a new subject, the people, and a new place, history" (Rancière xiii). As Rancière contends, Winckelmann upholds the mutilated statue of Hercules as "the highest expression of the liberty of the Greek people" and thus forges a link between "the political freedom, the withdrawal of action, and defection from the communitarian body" which initiates a wave of "aesthetic revolution" disrupting the hierarchical model of "the body, the story and the action" (Rancière xiv). Rancière's appraisal of the wholesale revolutionary value of Winckelmann's art history hinges on fragment. This interpretative approach provides a foundation for our investigation. The ramifications of fragment in terms of what Rancière calls "the body, the story and the action" (xiv) help us see how fragment signals Keats's and Rilke's endeavors to embody their new poesis.

Winckelmann's highest regard for Greek art and its cultural rootedness prepares the debate over the value of art for the modern nation, the debate which has been escalated by the transposition of the Parthenon sculptures (Jenkins 15). Under the urgent need for cultural authority in competition with France, the Parthenon sculptures were repackaged not only as "objects of art," as what Ian Jenkins argues (15-17), but as near totems of national pride. Theresa Kelley points out that the arrival of the Elgin Marbles in 1803 and their purchase in 1816 marked "the moment in English Romantic culture when the preference for Greek art encounters the liberal critique of spoliation [which was] disguised as the cultural recovery of precious artefacts" (Kelley 214-15). Kelley reminds us of the full complexity of the Elgin affairs in terms of cultural politics. The whole event was denounced by Lord Byron as shameless pillage of art (Esterhammer 32-35). In contrast, the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon was a fervent supporter, who compares his ecstasy at seeing them to a religious conversion: "as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon my mind" (qtd. in Webb 84-85). Haydon's response remains in the neo-classical mode of idealization, whereas Keats responds truly to the fragmented condition of the sculptures. For him, a young poet once lampooned in association with the Cockney (Cox 82-122), the sculptures embody cultural authority from which he has been barred but which he could enjoy an in-person experience through the museum. But this experience is not all reassuring. As Gillen Wood maintains, the early nineteenth century museum-goer would be trapped in the *lieu péril* between the "two eternities" of antiquity and the modern world (Wood, *The Shock* 129). Keats's sonnet and Hyperion poems show just such a poet caught in the gap between a vanished old order and an emerging new one.

The situation in France was similarly complicated. Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincey criticized Napoleon's spoliation of Rome in 1796. De Quincey's appeal to keep art in situ was launched again a century away when it was combined with the campaign against restoration of ancient art, which was spearheaded by Rodin. Rodin never visited Greece due to ill health. It was in the British Museum that Rodin came into contact with Parthenon sculptures and obtained affirmation about the direction that he had been taking. At least for Rodin, the British Museum at the end of the nineteenth century seemed to have outgrown the questions of decontextualization and idealization of cultural objects and became largely a venue, in lieu of the original site, where the original Greek art could be experienced.

Rodin once said: "Antiquity is my youth." His relationship with antiquity is already a way of looking in and looking back (Cahill). Rodin's self-assessment coheres with the nostalgic spirit of Hellenism. However, in the case of Rodin, it is not about declaring independence, but demonstrating continuity and embodying regeneration. Parthenon sculptures confirm Rodin's inkling that fragmentation is the extreme form of expression. Rodin develops fragment as his way of presenting the formative process of art making in parallel with the creative process of the universe. But his works challenge the dynamism of capitalism which is to commodify most things and thus to question the inherent value of art. Rodin's works in the form of fragmentation present emblems of the alienating modern world which acknowledges his masterpieces by rejecting them. Rodin's works represent the best example of what Rilke deems as *Kunst Ding*, which helps us reinstate the primary charm of Things.

It is the insights garnered from sculpture that connects Rilke with Keats. Previous comparison of them mainly focuses on their poetic mastery (Fitzgerald; Sandback). Frank Wood reminds us that Rilke pays tribute to Keats in a poem, "Deathbed Portrait of Keats, from a drawing by Severn, a replica by the artist of the drawing in the Keats-Shelley Memorial, Rome" (Wood, "Rilke" 220), which shows his treasured affinity with the Romantic poet. However, most critics have not dealt with the implications of sculpture for their poesis. This essay sets out to redress such a lack, by examining the way in which these two poets negotiate with the materiality of sculpture in order to mold an image of the poet fit to present their age and to withstand its challenges. Sculpture prompts them to formulate their response through the ideas of embodiment. This essay seeks to show how Keats struggles but fails to put forward an embodiment of a fully-fledged Apollo and how Rilke achieves the realization that dissolution of our body into the elements could inaugurate a new birth.

Keats, the "Sick Eagle" Keats's encounter with Parthenon sculptures provides an anomaly to what Sophie Thomas designates as "sight without site," a decontextualized but heightened visual experience that, as Thomas maintains, is the foundation of early nineteenth-century museum (Thomas 84). The British Museum allowed Keats to witness the material condition of Parthenon sculptures. Rather than a decontextualized zone, the museum provides for him and later for Rodin just the right place where they could engage with the "texture" of antiquity and through it the texture of the elements. Parthenon sculptures send Keats staggering to assess his vocation. The experience transports him to the "realms of gold," as presaged in his "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," (1816) (line 1). This sonnet, together with its companion, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" (1817), pays tribute to the ancient Greek tradition in textual and material terms. In the earlier poem, Keats compares the scenario of his reading Chapman's Homer to Cortez who with "the eagle eyes" "star'd at the Pacific -and all his men / Look'd at each other with a wild surmise" (lines 11-13). This state of speechless wonder is carried on in the second sonnet. Keats finds himself embroiled in a dialectical process which evokes Winckelmann's piece on the Belvedere Torso. As Grant Scott contends, in "disrupting syntactical relations and breaking down the poetic line," Keats "enacts the marbles' process of decay in language" (Scott 66). While the poem performs fragmentation, the poet admits initial concession. Keats announces himself as a novice with Herculean ambition in the mode of Neo-platonic reflection of truth and its shadows. Devastated, he is like a "sick eagle looking at the sky" (line 5). But he tries to shrug off the pressure by congratulating himself that he is granted a "gentle luxury" which allows him to come face to face with ancient glory, without "the cloudy winds to keep / Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye" (lines 6-8). The Pauline allusion celebrates this rare moment of seeing God, as what St. Paul pronounces, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Nevertheless, Keats is "mortified" to recognize his "weakness" in the "undescribable feud" between what lies in front of him and his "dim-conceived glories of the brain" (lines 9-10). The fragmented sculptures, which mix "Grecian grandeur" with the "rude / Wasting of old time," cause "a most dizzy pain" (lines 12, 11). The raw cut of fragments accentuates the surface undulation, carrying him across the "billowy main" (line 13) that separates him from Greece. The fragments grant him a glimpse of "a sun—a shadow of a magnitude" (line 14), which completes the

Pauline allusion. The fragments thus embody at once the source of true light and its shadow for having endured the physical transposition from Greece and temporal crossing from the fifth century BC. The cracked surfaces serve as entry points for the idea to break through and take shape. Keats laments his belatedness while demonstrating his perspicacity for the elevated thoughts which are facilitated by fragment materiality.

The interest in the "pure serene" of Homer (line 7), combined with the material fascination of fragments, enables Keats to extend his pursuit of poesis with the two epic attempts: "Hyperion: A Fragment" (1820) and "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream" (composed in 1819, published in 1856-57). In the first, he presents a young Apollo screaming while accepting his destiny. Keats experiments with historical styles as Hyperion and the Titans are molded in the Egyptian style, which he had also known through the British Museum (Kelley 220). As Alan Bewell illustrates, the introduction of the Egyptian elements in the poem "restructures" the classical war "along an east-west axis, a confrontation between the gods of Europe and those of the Orient" (Bewell 224). Bewell furthermore suggests that this arrangement indicates Keats planned the progress of Apollo to be an "aesthetic rewriting" of the progress of Napoleon (224). Keats is ambivalent toward Napoleon and holds skepticism about the new era in the wake of his defeat. This parallel between Apollo and Napoleon helps to explain the paralysis characterizing the fallen Titans and the ambivalence surrounding the new deity. This political undertone also accounts for Keats's struggle at crafting his poesis in the post-Napoleonic era.

As Apollo asks Mnemosyne: "O why should I / Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air / Yields to my step aspirant?" (III. 91-93). He feels destined (or "cursed") and "thwarted" to take his "aspirant" step in the free and "liegeless air." He shrieks upon a transformation that is in fact "d[ying] into life":

Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd:
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
. . . —At length
Apollo shriek'd; —and lo! from all his limbs
Celestial ("Hyperion: A Fragment," 3.126-36)

In terms of hair and sound, Apollo is presented in a parallel with Hyperion: "Golden his hair of short Numidian curl, / Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade / In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk / Of Memnon's image at the set of sun / . . . / Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp / He uttered," (2. 371-36). Such a parallel only suggests Keats's indulgence in mourning for the vanishing majesty and his inability to fully fashion a "celestial" Apollo nor to fathom his voice.

In "The Fall of Hyperion," the frame story of the poet's initiation shifts the genre from epic to romance and casts the whole venture into a museum visit with Moneta as a guide (Wood, *The Shock* 142-43). The "eternal domed Monument" (1. 72) which Moneta leads the poet into resembles the British Museum built in the Greek Revival style (Wood, *The Shock* 145). The poet himself assumes the role of the hero. While taking on the "hard task" (1. 121) of climbing the stairs, the poet "shriek[d]": "and the sharp anguish of my shriek / Stung my own ears—I strove hard to escape / The numbness" (1. 126-28). He barely manages to escape his "marmorealization" (Wood, *The Shock* 146). This paralysis reenacts the sick state of mortal awareness described in the sonnet, as he sees Saturn and Mnemosyne: "Like sculpture builded up upon the grave / Of their own power . . . / But my own weak mortality, I bore / The load of this eternal quietude" (1. 383-90). Having passed the test by being favored for his "unworthiness" (1. 182), the poet invokes Apollo: "Apollo! Faded, far flown Apollo! / Where is thy misty pestilence to creep / Into the dwellings, through the door crannies, / Of all mock lyrists, large self worshipers, / And careless Hectorers in proud bad verse" (1. 204-08). Such a reminder of a "fad[ing]" Apollo only highlights Keats's anxiety about the value of himself as one of those "mock lyrists" and "large self worshippers." As Gillen Wood rightly asks: "Why does the poet's experience of ancient myth at an imaginary museum produce a crisis of paralyzed wonder and pain?" (Wood, *The Shock* 146). This ponderous melancholy even invalidates the Neoplatonic note that ends the sonnet for here the poem breaks off with the "bright Hyperion; / His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels, / . . . / . . . on he flared—" (2. 57-61). In ending with the vanishing deity, Keats remains resistant to image forth a new era. In this second attempt at the same epic, the poet shrieks

in escaping his marmorealization, as if inflicted by the hesitation of Apollo at the point of his apotheosis in "Hyperion: A Fragment." But the project was still left unfinished.

There are various plausible interpretations of this failure. Gillen Wood contends that Hellenism was reoriented in the Regency period from "its private, literary, sentimental forms to a set of public visual-cultural icons symbolically charged with issues of imperial authority and ownership" (Wood, *The Shock* 148). Keats's "The Fall of Hyperion" shows a critique on this "imperial project of self-representation through an aestheticized Greece" (150). Agreeing with the main thrust of Gillen Wood's argument, I consider that Keats's failure shows his refusal to participate in the imperial ideology. Nevertheless, I would maintain that for Keats, an aestheticized Greece presents a viable means of self-representation for aesthetics, along with poesis, has to remain neutral in the political sense in order to maintain its rigor.

Keats's vision of an Apollo emerging from the gate of death suggests an echo to the Orphic myth. Keats's dyad Hyperion-Apollo embodies a perilous enterprise of poesis at the time when the *ancien régime* is abolished and a new order is yet to materialize. Likewise, Rilke learns from Rodin to cast an image of the modern poet with the trio, Orpheus-Eurydice-Hermes, at the time of unrelenting capitalism, which threatens to commodify art and to alienate the individual self. Keats repeatedly strives and fails to fully embody his idea of Apollo. In contrast, Rilke learns from Rodin to entertain dissolution and transformation as a mode of continuing vitality.

Rodin, "Antiquity is My Youth"

Rodin's first visit to the British Museum in 1881 coincided with his first government commission for *The Gates of Hell* (1880-1917). The English Press dubbed him "the French Phidias" (Garnier 40), readily associating him with the Greek master. The Parthenon sculptures were then embroiled in a heated debate about repatriation. Besides, the earthquake in Athens (1894) prompted an anti-restoration campaign of the temple. Rodin was its spokesperson. For him, these sculptures provided the opportune example of how common heritage ought to be preserved. As he wrote in 1905: "Yes, we must demand with all our energy and vigor that the ruins of the Parthenon be left to the breeze that play among its broken columns; . . . In fact I have just been to London . . . and was glad to find these great blocks of stone unchanged, with only wooden supports to prevent them from falling" (qtd. in Garnier 41).

This praise for the British Museum's exhibiting method goes together with his plea to conserve the heritage on site. His stance is paradoxical. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the sculptures in the British Museum allowed Rodin to fathom his affinity with antiquity and to set himself as a champion of this heritage.

After settling at Meudon in 1893, Rodin displayed his collection of fragmented antique sculptures together with his own works at his museum and the adjacent studio. As Rodin wrote to a friend in 1905: "I now have a collection of mutilated gods, . . . They are closer to their natural origins than any other sculptures. . . . though broken, they are not dead; they are vibrant and I make them all the more vibrant simply by completing them in my mind" (qtd. in Garnier 49).

Rodin's rapport with these fragments remains the source of his creativity. He endeavors to make them "vibrant" by "completing them in [his] mind." The idea of "vibrant" is absorbed by Rilke in his second monograph on Rodin, which protests against the lack of a spiritual home for genius in this alienating age: "there is nowhere any place for these things. . . . And are they not themselves the confession of their own tragedy, these radiant things which, in their loneliness, have drawn the heavens about them?" (Rilke, *Rodin* 68). Rilke calls the vitality of these sculptures "radiant" for they radiate the heavens that they carry about them against the undiscerning modern society.

Rodin identifies the modeling principle as the premium lesson that he learns from antiquity:

Observe any fragments of Greek sculpture: a piece of an arm, a hand. . . . In what does this beauty consist? Solely in modeling. Observe it closely, touch it; do you feel the precision of this modeling, firm yet elastic, in flux like life itself? It is full, it is like a fruit. All the eloquence of this sculpture comes from that. What is modeling? The very principle of creation. It is the juxtaposition of the innumerable reliefs and depressions that constitute every fragment of matter, inert or animated. Modeling creates the essential texture, supple, living, embracing every plane. (qtd. in Elsen 565-66)

Modeling is "the principle of creation," privileging tactile experience that underlies all "juxtaposition" of "reliefs and depressions." Modeling captures the vitality flowing between the material and the human beings and renders every surface plane a microcosm of life. It is in this sense that Rancière praises Rodin as the "master of surfaces" (Rancière 157).

The undulation effects of modeling best represent the interpenetration between the inner and the outer world. Rodin foregrounds his method as "rather than imagining the different parts of the body as flat surfaces, I pictured them as projections of interior volumes" (qtd. in Farge and Jenkins 13). As Georg Simmel explains the forte of Rodin, when "the separation that isolates the Cartesian thinking statues in self-contained splendor is broken down and becomes labile, when the movement of the inner world is caught up in a veritable amniotic exchange with the movement of the outer world," we start to realize the "epistemological dimension" of fragmented sculptures (qtd. in Schor 259). When sculptural contours are broken up and become "labile," the opened planes become an interface, like lips, between the outer and the inner world. We thus gain a glimpse into our existence as inseparable from the world.

Sarah Bartram characterizes the sculptural fragment as *non-finito* (including the unfinished and the truncated) and analyzes its recurrence in Rodin's work in four categories: the isolated body part, amputated form, assemblages, and emergence of form (Bartram 1;3). This essay concentrates on the amputated form and the emergence of form for their maximized impacts on poetic evocation and philosophical reflection. First, Ariadne (1905) is an instance of amputated form, which allows Rodin to wield the eternal force in the elements and to shift between the male and female body. Its reclining form and fragmentation intimate an echo to the river god Ilissos of the Parthenon group. The dialogue between Ilissos and Ariadne thus suggests that metamorphosis provides a grand scheme under which Rodin investigates the relationship between idea and form.

Second, on the emergence of form, Antoinette Le Normand-Romain explains:

The mark of this slowness and dissatisfaction, which are proof of the artist's sincerity and also of the rhythm that animates the universe, the non finito thus corresponds to what is most profound, most authentic in Rodin, his quest for a form taken to extremes in terms of expression and that is yet open to whatever influences the chance happenings of life may have on it. (qtd. in Bartram 9)

The *non finito* is a form apt to express the never-ending process of creation. In other words, Rodin's art reveals, rather than masking, the precariousness that is part of the nature of its making. The best example is Orpheus and Eurydice which will be examined later.

Rilke, "I Am"

Rodin's works, which mimic the force of the elements and exhibit the process of time, exert a great impact on Rilke's writings. Rilke's monographs on Rodin contribute to the wide influence of the master, whereas his poems demonstrate his ingrained elaboration on Rodin's sculpture as an emblem of resilience in the modern age. Rilke occupies a very crucial position at the confluence of European modern art and poetry for his root in German-speaking tradition and his immersion in French artistic arena. His three art essays (on the artists at Worpswede, Rodin, and Cézanne), together with his poetry and prose, express a unique sensitivity for the shifting cultural atmosphere. Rilke met Rodin in 1902 at the *Exhibition Rodin* in Prague. He gained a commission to write two monographs on Rodin (published in 1903, 1907). Their intense relationship ended sadly (Kleinbard). Nevertheless, Rilke has learned from the master perseverance in adversity. Rodin's unflinching faith in himself encouraged Rilke who suffered from severe lack of appreciation, as Rilke states: "It is Rodin's victory that he kept to his work and responded to destructive forces in Nature's way, namely, by beginning afresh with tenfold fertility" (Rilke, *Rodin* 60). The same desire empowers the sculptor and the poet alike, which exemplifies what Catriona Macleod calls *ut sculptura poesis* (Macleod 175).

In the first monograph, Rilke explores the origins of Rodin's inspiration—antiquity and Michelangelo; in the second, Rilke delves into the psychological impacts of Rodin's works. Together, they cast Rodin as a pioneer of modern art. Rilke understands Rodin's endeavor to reinstate sculpture to its origin as part of ritual: "[sculpture] must be made, . . . untouchable, sacrosanct, separated from the influence of accident or time, . . . It must be fitted into the surrounding air as into a niche and thus be given a security, a stability, a sublimity" (Rilke, *Rodin* 8). Rilke elevates Rodin's works to eternal time and space, rooted in, but not tied to, their origins. The works and their environs are mutually constitutive, just like the fetish in the primal past.

Rilke is privileged to see Rodin in action: "As always, he kept step beside it, . . . walking like the ploughman behind his plough. . . . By beginning with these and producing from many confused details a great simplification, he did what Christ did for the people, when, with a sublime parable, He cleansed of their guilt who came questioning Him blindly"(29-30). Rilke's Rodin is a ploughman-like Christ figure, yielding "the eternal" from various objects and elevating our mundane life to a "sublime parable" to which some of us are blind. As Rilke concludes the first monograph: "he was a worker who

desired nothing but to participate with all his powers in the humble and difficult existence of his medium. This implied a certain renunciation of life; but just by the patience of such renunciation did he win life: for the world offered itself to his chisel" (43). Rilke uses the dialectic of renunciation and triumph to cast Rodin into a master who gives new life to the world by submitting to it. This dialectic enables Rilke to realize dissolution is the precondition of regeneration.

The second monograph investigates the psychological dimensions of sculptures as Things. Rilke sets Rodin's work in an anthropological context: "I am as one who would remind you of your childhood. . . . That small, forgotten object, willing as it was to represent any and every thing, made you familiar with thousands of things by filling a thousand roles, . . . that something, . . . prepared the way for your first contacts with the world." (45;46). In other words, when we were children we tended to use one thing to represent all things in a way to engage with the world. It goes in parallel with how the artist uses one thing to give shape to our desire. The mediation between the reference (signified, tenor) and the referent (the signifier, vehicle) will be explained later in the framework of the Orphic myth.

Mediation is deliberately shown in *The Monument to Balzac* in order to augment the emotional and spiritual resonances. As a bridge between the two monographs, this piece expresses "[t]he figure of a creator in his arrogance, erect in the midst of his own motion as in a vortex which catches the whole world up into his seething head" (50). Rodin first creates a figure and then eliminates all non-essential parts of the body. In other words, he pares down material to reveal the essence inside so that the piece can absorb the world. In this intentional formation of a fragment, which took almost six years in creation, Rodin makes a reference to himself and to all artists who suffer from neglect. Unfortunately, this piece was rejected by the commissioner and returned to the studio. This rejection is deeply troubling. This piece is rejected for having articulated the *Zeitgeist*, that is, "we are a nomad people, ... because we have no longer a common home" (68). It dramatizes the dilemma of art, that is, part of its *raison d'être* involves rejection by the very society that it is made to represent. In other words, the modern society acknowledges the impacts of its art by alienating it. This piece aptly showcases Rodin's sculpture as an emblem of art's resilience in the modern world.

The interplay between emergence and regression that empowers *The Monument to Balzac* continues to dominate *Orpheus and Eurydice*. This piece features Orpheus covering his eye while Eurydice following his heels, and assuring him with the weight of her body. At the exit of the Hades, they are still "in touch" with each other. By choosing this moment, Rodin privileges sculpture over music by accentuating the materiality of this episode. It reminds us of the earthly origin and anchor of Orpheus's music and also of Rodin's art. Nevertheless, Rilke seems to suggest poetry alone provides a way out of the impasse for sculpture's attempt to "embrac[e] all things" (49) only ends in materializing the lament of the imminent loss. Tactility predicates on immediacy but could not withstand loss. Rilke later would prove with his poem, "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes," that poetry can redeem loss by illuminating it as an "immanent" part of human existence, and therefore not a cause for lament.

Rilke then moves on to another work of emergence:

The light passing over the recumbent back of *Danaïde* (1889) slowly, as if the hours scarcely caused it to advance? And did anyone know of that complete gamut of shadows reaching to the shy transparent darkness which we see sometimes about the navel in certain small antiques, and which we now only find in the hollow of curved rose-leaves? (53)

The concentric mirroring, stringing together the back of the *Danaïde*, the navel of antique sculptures, and the hollow of rose leaves, reminds us of the interiority of surface planes that connects all forms. The "shy transparent darkness" envisages the darkness from which Eurydice emerges and returns. Furthermore, the recumbent form of the *Danaïde* also suggests an affinity with the dialogue between Rodin and Parthenon, Ariadne—Illissos. All these associations foreground the elemental connection between presence and absence, present and past, earth and water, marble and flower, human subject and the material underpinning of life, etc.

Interestingly, Rilke's investigation into Rodin's method brings him close to Keats. In a note passage on Rodin (17 Nov. 1900), there is an apparent echo to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

. . . as if hesitating, upon the lips of the mountain range that has begun to tell its tale. . . . As a delicate and fragrant fruit with the whole aroma of its flesh, still warm from hidden summers, loosens itself from its shell, so these animated figures emerge from the hard stone, . . . and the mournful note of songs started but, overcome by weeping, never played out. (Rilke, *Rodin* 72)

For Rilke, Rodin helps to "loosen" the "tale" of the mountain range, and to "animate" figures from the stone. Rilke resorts to "the mournful note of songs started but . . . never played out" to suggest the ingenuity of Rodin's sculptures which records the process of creation. Keats prefers art and poetry to music for "those unheard [melodies] / Are sweeter" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn," lines 11-12) since the potentiality of music would never be spent when expressed in art and poetry. Rilke well understands that Keats's exploration into the continuum between utterance and silence stands in parallel with Rodin's probe into emancipation and constraint. Eventually, insights garnered from Keats and Rodin become crystallized when Rilke molds the poet's image.

The image of the poet in Rilke's poetry develops in two phases: Apollo and Orpheus. The two poems on Apollo collected in the *New Poems* (1907,1908) illustrate how the materiality of sculpture serves as the foundation of his poesis. The earlier poem, "Early Apollo," suggests an investigation in parallel with Keats's undertaking. This poem evokes the poetry-art agon that structures Keats's poems on ancient Greek material culture. For both, the encounter with the ancient sculpture is a confrontation. Keats congratulates himself for this chance to come face to face with the Elgin Marbles. Instead of admitting defeat, he terms it a "gentle luxury." He develops a dialectics of submission and triumph to safeguard him through this "undescribable feud." A similar set of imagery of light is used for Rilke's Apollo: "nothing of his head / could prevent the splendor of all poems / from striking us with almost lethal force" (*Poetry* 131). Though adopting a similar trajectory, Rilke is not obsessed with competition but basks in the almost naked splendor of the fragment. This early Apollo, containing all the potential of spring, is like something "between still leafless branches / A morning looks through that's already / Consummate Spring" (131). This is a budding poet, with "yet no shadow in his gaze," and temples "too cool for the laurel" (131). Only later from his eyebrows' arches, rose petals will "drift down on the trembling of his mouth" (131). Paradoxically, its *non finito* condition preserves every part as bright as ever. Focusing on the mouth, Rilke presents an Apollo who is about to sing: "gleaming / and only drinking something with its smile / as though the song were being infused in him" (131). While bringing this sculpture into being, Rilke also proclaims his own stance as a poet. The recurrence of "noch" (translated as "still" and "yet no") in this poem suggests an allusion to Keats's "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn," line 1). Different from Keats's questionings about the "shade of a magnitude" of the Elgin marbles ("On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," line 14) and the "Cold pastoral" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn," line 45), Rilke appears not to be concerned about the rivalry with the sculpture, but instead indulges in the fertile potentiality of this "never used" mouth of Apollo (*Poetry* 131).

In the later poem, "The Archaic Torso of Apollo," fragmentation charges the sculpture with an active temporal dimension, "His torso still burns like a streetlamp (*Kandelaber*) dimmed / In which his gaze, lit long ago, / Holds fast and shines" (*Poetry* 223). Judith Ryan points out that this comparison to a "turned-down gas candelabra" foregrounds the status of ancient fragment as a site of encounter between antiquity and modernity (Ryan 81-84). This note of technology shuttles us between past and present. The sculpture though broken still burns with vigor just as the gas light that has been dimmed but not extinguished. This comparison reminds us of the contemporary context of Rilke's poetry, in which gas lighting was a modern wonder. It indicates the materialist foundation of Rilke's poesis that sees artistic creativity in parallel with newly accessed sources of energy.

The dialectic pattern—"[w]e never knew," and "otherwise . . . nor / not"—that charges through the poem enacts the presence-absence dynamism of fragmentation: the lower part of the loins is missing so that we can trace "that center where procreation flared" and this stone "break[s] forth from all its contours / Like a star" (*Poetry* 223). The accumulative effect of this rhetorical structure strikes home as "there is no place / That does not see you" (223). This poem concludes with an exhortation to the reader: "You must change your life" (223). Fragmentation opens up the contours and allows the surface planes to enter into a relationship with each other and with the surrounding space and the intervening time, otherwise it would "stand cut off / and cold" (223). Such a sculpture becomes all seeing eyes, which jolts the viewer from complacency.

This poem exemplifies Rilke's penchant for imperatives. Critics have long disparaged this pattern in Rilke's poetry. Some critics shrug it off; some criticize it for contesting authority (Waters 713). I would argue that the fragmented materiality of the sculpture engages us in an affective manner which disrupts authoritarian readings of this poem. These two poems on Apollo register Rilke's intuition into how sculpture serves as a springboard for poetic ideas. Together they announce Rilke's coming into his own while remaining vigilant.

The second phase of Rilke's exploration of the poet's image is propelled by Rodin's *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" (1904) and the "Sonnets to Orpheus" (1923) together present a long negotiation with his vocation. Rilke enriches the Orphic myth by divulging its elemental

operation and integrating the three figures. Robert McGahey traces the history of this myth back to two moments. The first occurs at the transition from the oral culture of the Homeric epic to the invention of literature at the fifth century BC, whereas the second was marked by Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872, 1886) (McGahey xiii). Both signal a paradigm shift, in which Orpheus functions as a mediator, carrying the shamanic mode of thought into the logocentric age (xiv). In the end, Orpheus's scattered limbs stir the universe back to life in the form of cosmic vibration (xvii). This pattern of shattering and regeneration provides a dynamism for Rilke to dramatize the risk of identity formation.

"Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" probes into the "souls' strange mine" (*Poetry* 199), in which the elements of life, porphyry and roots, are meshed with the veins of humans. As Erika Nelson points out, what we have here is not only a burial ground but a fertile basin with "renewed vigor" attendant on the entrance of the three back into "the organic cycle" (Nelson 86). This poem thus announces a grand cycle of life and death. Though endowed with the power of music to enchant, Orpheus is forced to remain silent and fumble along "the single path" (*Poetry* 199). He learns to divide his senses: "for while his sight raced ahead like a dog, / turned around, came back, and then stood / far away and waiting at the path's next turn, -- / his hearing, like an odor, lagged behind" (199). His vision is intensified in frustration while his hearing tries to feel the presence of Eurydice. He continues to reassure himself "[t]hey were coming" (201, emphasis original).

Then Hermes enters the scene with Eurydice: "The god of faring and of distant messages, / eyes shining under the traveler's hood, / / and entrusted to his left hand: *she*" (*Poetry* 201, emphasis original). Being a messenger god, he does not initiate events, but carries things across. Eurydice is "[t]he one so loved that from a single lyre / came more lament than ever from lamenting women; / that from lament a world arose, This one so loved" (201). The palindrome anticipates the circuitous regard of Orpheus. She "was all in herself, like a woman near birth," ignoring Orpheus and concentrating on her impending "ascen[t] into life" (201). Her death in fact is a blessing: "And her having died / filled her like abundance. / Like a fruit ripe with sweetness and night" (201). Her death renders her a virgin again: "She was in a new virginity / and untouchable; her sex had closed / like a young flower at approach of evening" (203). Here her folding-in is evoked in a chiasmus with the opening out of the early Apollo, who is like "A morning looks through that's already / Consummate Spring" (131). The chiasmus registers the influence of fragments on Rilke's insights into life and death.

Her earlier descent cuts her off from all attachments as she was "no longer the blond wife / who echoed often in the poet's songs" (*Poetry* 203). Totally herself, only enmeshed in nature, "[s]he was already loosened like long hair / and given over like fallen rain / and handed out like a limitless supply. / She was already root" (203). In the process of ascending back to life, she is at once pregnant and a virgin. But with a glance, Orpheus completes her dying act. This event is narrated to Eurydice by Hermes: "And when without warning / the god stopped her and with pain in his voice / uttered the words: He has turned around--, / she didn't understand, and answered softly: *Who?*" (203, emphasis original). Eurydice has long forgotten Orpheus. The poem concludes in a tableau, in which Hermes follows Eurydice back to the Hades:

... He [Orpheus] stood and saw
how on that stripe of meadow path
with mournful look the god of messages
turned silently around, to follow the shape
already returning on that same path,
her steps, constrained by the long winding-sheets,
soft, uncertain, and without impatience. (*Poetry* 203)

The repeated description of the winding-sheets alludes to the special feature of Parthenon sculptures (Farge and Jenkins 16; Prettejohn 103). This is a hallmark of Rilke's insight on the capability of the plastic art to enact lament and yearning, and to suggest the undulation across fabric, stone, and music that connects all things in the world.

The emphasis on Eurydice signals Rilke's revitalization of the myth. As Nelson reminds us, Eurydice is a shape-shifter in Greek mythology (Nelson 173). In death, she has been healed of the "wound" of marriage and has regained her integrity (96). Having become part of nature, her human form is scattered across the world and thus presaging the fate of Orpheus. She represents the feminine element which is forever in the state of becoming (97). Rilke revives this mythic dimension of Eurydice and makes her complementing Orpheus's mission, rather than a victim of his blunder. This emphasis

on Eurydice enables the release of Rilke's poetry from the binds of deconstruction theory and gender-centered critique.

On the one hand, Paul de Man considers Rilke's use of the figure exemplary as a deconstructive allegory of reading as it promises no identification of tenor and vehicle (De Man 46). In Rilke's work, Orpheus's foiled quest enacts both a renunciation and a liberation (47). As De Man insists, "the renunciation corresponds to the loss of a primacy of meaning located within the referent and it liberates in order to achieve the new rhetoric of Rilke's 'figure'" (47). For De Man, Orpheus stands for the referent who learns to give up his pursuit of the reference. But I would argue for Rilke Orpheus and Eurydice are referent and reference to each other: for Orpheus Eurydice represents the anchor and source of his art, and for Eurydice the meaning of her existence used to reside in Orpheus. In the end, the dialectic between renunciation and liberation work on both sides and beyond the deconstructionist discourse. Having confined the dialectic within the linguistic and rhetorical refrain, De Man misses the factor of sculpture which would add in a material dimension and enlarge the horizon of discussion to include the cosmic and the elemental. Rilke's idea of sculpture as "thing" harks back to the collective childhood memory of a seamless identity between object and idea but the inevitable fragmentation of the thing disrupts the wish to unite the two. In other words, fragmentation accentuates the process of mediation while acknowledging the impossibility, and even undesirability, of a finished unity. Having Hermes return with Eurydice, whose steps are "constrained by the long winding-sheets," Rilke enacts and then transcends Rodin's *modus operandi*, renunciation and liberation. Her figure is "constrained" by the material composition only to be emancipated through poetry which fumbles in time.

On the other, Joseph Metz, drawing on De Man's deconstruction theory and Julia Kristeva's abject theory, contends that Orpheus's embrace of Eurydice banishes her like giving birth to an abject object and thus accomplishes a "myth of male birth" (Metz 251). However, I would argue that Metz's failure to see Eurydice as an independent entity with her own value perpetuates the male appropriation that he sets out to expose. A more positive Eurydice stands at the core of Rilke's poesis, which will be illustrated in the "Sonnets to Orpheus."

The sonnet cycle seeks to reinstate the authority of Orpheus in the modern age which has lost touch with primary senses and rescinded faith in beauty. The cycle is partly occasioned by the death of Wera Oukama Knoop, a nineteen-year-old Dutch dancer. The first sonnet accounts the beginning of the universe that occurs inside the ear: "A tree arose. . . / O tall tree within the ear!" (1. 1. 1-2). Eventually, it is in hearing that temples will be built (1.1. 14). Nicholas Reynolds traces the attention to hearing throughout the cycle to Rilke's early interest in the transcription of audibility, such as phonograph (Reynolds 2). This modern technology enables him to explore the values of voice, presence, vibration, and mediation in the realm of poetry.

In a sonnet addressing Wera, Rilke reflects on her youth and beauty in the form of dance and sculpture:

But you now, O stolen one, . . .
. . . , once more
will I rehearse you and show you to them,
.
Dancer first, whose body, full of hesitation,
suddenly stopped—as if your youth were being cast
in bronze (grieving and listening). . . .
Illness was near. Already gripped by shadows,
your blood coursed darker; . . .
.
. . . Until after terrible pounding
it stepped through the hopelessly open gate. (1.25.1-14)

This dancer is "stolen" from us by death; however, having her on earth for a while is also a blessing stolen from heaven. In writing this sonnet, Rilke once more "rehearse[s]" Wera's move and reconstitutes her person. Rilke copes with his bereavement by imagining her in the mode of a sculpture as her dance "suddenly stopped," as if it was "cast / in bronze." Her blood, which "coursed darker," indicates the cause of her death, leukemia, a disease which will contribute to Rilke's death in due course. She has stepped through the gate of hell. But the image of a bronze sculpture, together with this sonnet, insists on "grieving and listening," not only lamenting the loss but remaining vigilant for our next move beyond mourning.

In invoking a "tall tree within the ear" and casting a bronze of grieving and listening, Rilke delves into modern implications of metamorphosis. In the final sonnet of the first part, Orpheus is torn apart:

but your sound lingered on in lions and rocks
and in the trees and birds. You sing there still.
O you lost god! You neverending trace!
Only because hatred tore and scattered you
are we *hearers* now and a mouth for nature. (1.26.10-14, emphasis original)

The dismemberment of Orpheus is the precondition of our becoming "hearers" and "a mouth for nature." Orphic mythology thus responds to the modern unease about our self-identity. As William Waters reminds us, the central concern of the "Sonnet" is "to urge you to want to become not-you" (Waters 715-16). This is best exemplified by the following sonnet:

Be in advance of all parting, . . .
Be forever dead in Eurydice--, and climb more singingly,
climb more praisingly, back into the pure relations.
Here, among the vanishing, be, in the realm of decline
be a ringing glass that shatters even as it rings.
Be—and know as well the terms of nonbeing,
the infinite ground of your inmost vibration,
so that, this once, you may wholly fulfill them.
To the used, as well as the mute and muffled
stock of nature's fullness, to the inexpressible sums,
add yourself jubilantly, and nullify the score. (2.13.1-14)

This sonnet comprises the destinies of both Orpheus and Eurydice. Accepting the loss of Eurydice, Orpheus can sing praises while returning to the "pure relations" with the world. The world waits to hear Orpheus sing in order to be awakened to existence. This sonnet is charged with a set of imperatives, to "be" and "know" the terms of "nonbeing." Eventually we are urged to add ourselves "jubilantly" to the sums of nature and by doing so "nullify the score." Since we are one with all other creatures, numbers are no longer relevant. I agree with Waters that "[t]he willingness to be hailed, to become you, is an act of taking on responsibility and of responsiveness" (Waters 722). To "be hailed" to assume our responsibility is the imperative of Rilke's Orphic myth.

Wera / Eurydice is the first one to be "hailed" by Orpheus but in order to complete her mission she needs to imbibe his calling. The course of her life enacts the trajectory of the Orphic myth: "And almost a girl . . . / and made herself a bed within my ear. / . . . / She slept the world. . . . / Where is her death? . . . / . . . A girl almost . . ." (1.2.1-14). The form of this sonnet mimics the ringing and echoing of Orpheus's "song and lyre" (1.2.2). The death and departure of the girl require Orpheus to become the only one "with tones that nonetheless praise, / sings the heart born into the Whole" (2.2.13-14). Her return to the Hades presages Orpheus's dismemberment and ultimate absorption into the earth to awaken a new birth.

In the final sonnet, Rilke calls upon Wera:

Silent friend of the many distances,
.
Amid the rafters of dark belfries
let yourself peal. Whatever feeds on you
is taking strength from such fare.
Know every path through transformation.
. . . .
If you find drinking bitter, become wine.
. . . .
And if the earthly should forget you,
say to the silent loam: I flow.
To the rushing water speak: I am. (2.29.1-14)

He is sure that his poetry will one day wake up Wera, the "silent friend." Wera takes on the same mission as Orpheus and she will "peal" like a bell amid the "rafters of dark belfries," and offer nourishment to whatever that "feeds on [her]." Her body will be subsumed in the dynamism of transformation. The sonnet speaker assumes the role of Hermes, ferrying her across realms. He encourages her to "become wine," taking on the destiny of Dionysus. The exhortation accumulates in

the cycle and now reaches a crescendo: "say to the silent loam: I flow. / To the rushing water speak: I am." This is an acknowledgment of the transmutation between soil and water that defines the operation of all vital existences. Edward Snow's translation of "Erde" as "loam" is ingenuous for "loam" as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary refers to "clayed earth," occasionally to "the material of the human body," and also to "a soil of great fertility." The poet encourages Eurydice-Wera to declare herself to the "silent loam" and the "rushing water," suggesting a desire for her not only to facilitate but to undergo the transformation between the elements. The sonnet cycle thus harks back to Rodin's Ariadne, which echoes Illissos of the Parthenon fragments. It enacts what Rilke has intuited from the master—that metamorphosis is the base and horizon of self-identity. This knowledge is best performed in sculpture and deeply conveyed through poetry.

Conclusion

Winckelmann's three-phase engagement with the Belvedere Torso remains the model for the encounter with ancient sculpture in the museum. Especially for Keats and Rilke, the encounters spark transformation in their style and self-esteem in response to the difficulties of their time. On the one hand, Keats acknowledges his role as a fledgling poet like a "sick eagle." He endeavors to materialize an Apollo as the emerging deity only to realize that Apollo's shriek and resistance are to be taken up by himself. His repeated failure in embodying a new order suggests a skepticism about the imperialist ideology of progress. On the other, Rilke works first with Apollo then moves on to cast the composite figure of Orpheus, Eurydice and Hermes, as his image of the new poet. Rilke's new Orphic myth builds upon Rodin's principle of modeling which enacts the dynamic process of the universe. In the end, Rilke exhorts us to declare "I am" to the earth and the water in order to counteract the atomizing tendency of capitalist society even when our bodies are dissolving into the elements. In Keats's hesitance to materialize a vision of the new era and in Rilke's declamation to the evolving elements, we see fragmented sculpture provides a timely leverage for them to craft strategies to wield the ever-changing world.

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