

The Body Project: Anatomy, Relationships, and Representation  
An Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference  
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Oral Presentation

**Spying on Lazarus in the Cave: Keats and the Still Body in The Fall of Hyperion**

If accepted for the conference, my presentation will be a critical exploration of John Keats' craft in *The Fall of Hyperion*, particularly his description of bodies. I contend that in his choice to describe still bodies, or bodies at rest, Keats resists the temporal pressures of narrative and language, achieves a powerful effect of suspense, and reinvigorates the potential for visual description in poetry. My argument will engage with Gotthold Lessing's *The Laocoön*, and will attempt to challenge Lessing's proscriptions that writers avoid descriptions of bodies at rest in favor of bodies in action. Instead, I will demonstrate how Keats follows Lessing's proscriptions for visual artists (depicting bodies mid-gesture, so as to suggest but not depict climactic action). I will explore the instability of the "I" in Keats's poem, and how that instability is essential as the speaker moves through (sometimes by not moving) the strange spatio-temporal realm of the poem. Finally, I will explore the significance of looking as an action, using Orrin Wang's work on Keats's *Lamia* to explore how *The Fall of Hyperion* is pre-cinematic, and how one manifestation of the unstable "I" serves as an interscoper, a figure I see as resembling the interlocutor in dramatic monologues. In general, my point will be to defend the visual description of still bodies in poems, and to explore the potential effects of such a figure. I think this topic would suit *The Body Project* conference both because the subject matter is the body and its treatment in poetry, and because it explores the interdisciplinary links between visual and verbal art.