A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce! 
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more 
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn; 
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night, 
And for the day faint visions there are store; 
Vanish, ye phantoms, from my idle spright, 8
Into the clouds, and never more return!

Spring 1819

1848

Lamia  In a note printed at the end of the poem, Keats cited as his source the following story in Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621):

One Menippus Lycias, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth. . . . The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found herself to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus's gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself described, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.

In ancient demonology a lamia was a monster in woman's form who preyed on human beings. Several passages of Keats's romance seem, however, to call on readers to sympathize with this monster, as one might with Coleridge's Geraldine or Landon's Fairy of the Fountains. In the contest between Lamia and Apollonius it is hard to know what side to take.

The poem, written between late June and early September 1819, is a return, after the Spenserian stanzas of The Eve of St. Agnes, to the pentameter couplets Keats had used in Endymion and other early poems. Keats's friends Charles Armitage Brown and Richard Woodhouse commented in letters on how Lamia was influenced by the characteristic meter of the Restoration poet John Dryden.

Lamia

Part 1

Upon a time, before the faery broods 
Drove Nymph and Satyr 1 from the prosperous woods, 
Before King Oberon's bright diadem, 
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem, 
5 Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns 
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns, 2

In a letter of June 9, 1819, Keats wrote: "I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing, both from the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abating of my love of Fame. I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying Pet-lamb. . . . You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most missed this year has been writing an ode to Indolence."

2. Cowslips are primroses, here blooming amid the rushes they love. 8. A spirit, or spirit." 
4. vivid, keen.
6. transit, a passing, quick, though not permanent, movement.
7. vivid, keen.
8. The word "lamb" is used metaphorically here, referring to the poet's own work, which he considers as a "pet-lamb" of his imagination and creativity.
9. Keats uses the word "lamb" to signify innocence and purity, as well as the idea of youth and new beginnings, which is connected to the beginning of spring.
10. Keats is using the word "lamb" to refer to his own work, which he considers as a "pet-lamb" of his imagination and creativity.
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13. Keats is using the word "lamb" to signify innocence and purity, as well as the idea of youth and new beginnings, which is connected to the beginning of spring.
14. Keats is using the word "lamb" to refer to his own work, which he considers as a "pet-lamb" of his imagination and creativity.
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed:
Their lustres with the gloseomterv tapiseries —
So rainbow-sid'd, touch'd with miseries.
55 She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish' fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's t'iar:¹
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitt'r-sweet!
60 She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls² complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there?
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.³
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake,
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus, while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stoon'd falcons ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,
I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one; for thou dost not hear
The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear:
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
70 Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moon.
I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flames,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phoebean dart, ⁴
Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
75 Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?
Whereat the star of Lethe, not delay'd
His ros'y eloquence, and thus inquired:
'Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired!
Thou beauteous wraith, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever blis't thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
Where she doth breathe! "Bright planet, thou hast said,"
Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
80 And by thine eyes, and by thy starr'y crown!"
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays

1. Ariadne's jeweled wedding crown, or t'iar ('t'iar'), was given to her by the god Bacchus, who took her as his wife after she was abandoned by her faithless mortal lover Theseus. The crown, transformed into a constellation of stars in the sky, is represented in Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne, which Keats had seen when the painting was exhibited in London in 1816. Keats's memories of this painting may also inform his reference to Bacchus's chariot and leopards in "Ode to a Nightingale".
2. "Pearls" had become almost a synonym for teeth in Elizabethan love poems.
3. Proserpine had been carried off to Hades by Pluto from the field of Enna, in Sicily.
4. Stoop is the term for the plume of a falcon on his prey.
5. A ray of Phoebus Apollo, god of the sun.
6. Hermes, who appeared like a star on the banks of Lethe, in the darkness of Hades. (One of Hermes's offices was to guide the souls of the dead to the lower regions.)
7. Satyr, a tutor of Bacchus, usually represented as a fat, jolly drunkard.
8. Either "like a tune" or "like the sound of the psaltery" (an ancient stringed instrument).
10. The color of a damask rose (large and fragrant pink rose)
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,\nWither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;\nAnd, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoil't all her silver mail, and golden brede;\nMade gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent\ of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.

Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar\ These words dissolv'd: Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;\nAnd rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peeran rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passion'd\ To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle\ to the minstrelsly:
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore

Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
To un perplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;\nIntigue with the specious chaos, and dispar
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,\ And kept his rosy terms\ in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairly
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house;
Of all she list, strange or magnificent;
Wished how, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium,\ or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids' fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretch'd out at ease, beneath a glinting pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine\ Mulciber's columns gleam in far pizzazzian line
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.

Now on the mght-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow.

In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.

Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;

For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown weari'd of their Corinth talk;
Over the solitary hills he fared,

3. I.e., the yellow of sulfur (thrown up by a volcano) replaced her former silver moon color.
4. Embroidery, interwoven pattern. "Mail": interlinked rings, as in a coat of armor.
5. Cenchrea (Keats's "Cenchreas") was a harbor of Corinth, in southern Greece.
6. Felt intense excitement.
7. I.e., of knowledgeable ("sciential") brain to disentangle ("un perplex") bliss from its closely related pain, to define their quarreled-over ("pettish") limits, and to separate out ("estrange") their points of contact, and the swift changes of each condition into its opposite. Cf. Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," lines 21-26 (p. 982).
8. I.e., turn to her own artful purpose the seeming ("specious") chaos.
9. The terms spent studying in "Cupid's college."
In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
My essence? What scenerer palaces,
Where I may all my many senses please?
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
It cannot be—Adieu! So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swoon’d, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.

The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite’s woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity.

Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires.

And then she whisper’d in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish’d days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.

And next she wonder’d how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir’d, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass’d him by,
Where’gainst a column he lean’d thoughtfully
At Venus’ temple porch, mid baskets heap’d
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap’d
Late on that eve, as ’twas the night before
The Adonian feast, whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
Lyceus from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman’s lore so well;
And every word she spake entic’d him on
To unperplex’d delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say what­ever they please
Of the sweets of Fairies, Pers,1 Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,

4. I.e., he was absorbed in musing about the obscurities of Plato’s philosophy.
5. As Orpheus looked at Eurydice in Hades.
Orpheus was allowed by Pluto to lead Eurydice back to Earth on condition that he not look back at her, but he could not resist doing so and hence lost her once more.
6. One of the seven sisters composing the constellation Pleiades. The lines that follow allude to the ancient belief that the Pleiads traveled inside crystalline spheres whose movements produced heavenly music.
7. Detailed, minutely accurate.
8. The feast of Adonis, beloved by Venus.
9. I.e., delight not mixed with its neighbor, pain (see line 192).
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles² or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright.
That Lycius could not love in half a flint,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart.
More pleasantly by playing woman's part.
With no more awe than what her beauty gave.
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.

Lycius to all made eloquent reply.
Marrying to every word a twin-born sigh;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmis'd
By blinded Lycius, so in her compriz'd.
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how.
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all;
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,⁴
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companion'd or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls.
Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near.
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste.
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,
"Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?"

Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"—
"I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who
Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied,
"Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door.
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabb'd steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble hue.
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Eolian,
Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house:
And but the flutter-winged verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befell,
Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

Part 2

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clench'd it quite; but too short was their bliss.

To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss,
Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin; side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Float'd into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they repos'd,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill

2. Descended from the pebbles with which, in Greek myth, Pyrrha and Deucalion repeopled the earth after the flood.
3. Bound up, absorbed.
4. Temples of Venus, whose worship sometimes involved ritual prostitution. The city of Corinth was notorious in antiquity as a center of commerce and prostitution.
5. Like sounds from the wind harp (Aeolus is god of winds), which responds musically to a current of air.
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harboured in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass’d beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsaken.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empire
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment’s thought is passion’s passing bell?
“Why do you sigh, fair creature?” whisper’d he.
“Why do you think?” return’d she tenderly.
“You have deserted me;—where am I now?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
No, no, you have dismiss’d me; and I go
From your breast houseless: ay, it must be so.”
He answer’d, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror’d small in paradise,
“My silver planet, both of eye and morn!”
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unedled rose?
“Ah, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes?”
My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abash’d withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth’s voice.
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the thronged streets your bridled car
Wheels round its dazzling spokes.”—The lady’s cheek.
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseecching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new,
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as ‘twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.

6. The planet Venus, which is both the morning and the evening star.

7. Playfully: “You see how great your troubles were!”

Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo’s presence when in act to strike,
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she lov’d the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour.
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
“Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
I have not ask’d it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the cied earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?
“I have no friends,” said Lamia, “no, not one;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known;
My parents’ bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns.
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
Even as you list invite your many guests;
But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
With any pleasure on me, do not bid
Old Apollo—him keep me hid.”
Lycius, perplex’d at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betray’d.

It was the custom then to bring away,
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veil’d, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song.
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pomposity,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but’tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportess of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.

120 Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade.
Of palm and plantain, met from either side.
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch’d one to one
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerv’d upon the soft
Wool-woof’d carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyaged took
To the high roof, still mimick’d as they rose
Along the mirror’d walls by twin-clouds odorous
Twelve spher’d tables, by silk seats inspher’d,
High as the level of a man’s breast rear’d
On libbard’s paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres’ horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appeared, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister’d hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
The herd approach’d; each guest, with busy brain,
Arriving at the portal, gaz’d amain,
And enter’d marveling; for they knew the street,
Remember’d it from childhood, all complete
Without a gap, yet ne’er before had seen

That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne;
So in they hurried all, maz’d, curious and keen;
Save one, who look’d thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk’d in austere;
’Twas Apollonius: something too he laugh’d,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft;
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt—’twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. “Tis no common rule,
Lycius,” said he, “for uninvited guest
To force himself upon you, and infest
With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong.
And you forgive me.” Lycius blush’d, and led

The old man through the inner doors broad-spread;
With reconciling words and courteous mien,
Turning into sweet milk the sophist’s spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Fill’d with pervading brilliance and perfume:
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood.

When in an antichamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to please press’d,
By ministring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet’d
Pour’d on his hair, they all mov’d to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vowel’d undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
But when the happy vintage touch’d their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia’s self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.

Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
Flush’d were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright.
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflower’d, or forest-trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osier’d gold were brought
High as the handles heap’d, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow’d at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
What for the sage, old Apollonius?

8. Adorned with fretwork (interlaced patterns).
9. The horn of plenty, overflowing with the products of Ceres, goddess of grain.
1. Plaited. An “osier” is a strip of willow used in weaving baskets.
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
"Lamia!" he shriek’d; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
"Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
In the bride’s face, where now no azure vein
Wander’d on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
The deep-recessed vision—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
"Shut, shut those juggling’ eyes, thou ruthless man!
Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long offended might,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch!
Mark how, possess’d, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
My sweet bride withers at their potency.”
"Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycius answer’d, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov’d; “from every ill
Of life have I preserv’d thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpentine prey?”
Then Lamia breath’d death breath; the sophist’s eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant; stinging; she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion’d him to be silent; vainly so,
He look’d and look’d again a level—No!
"A Serpent!” echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished;
And Lycius’ arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

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2. A fern whose spikes resemble a serpent’s
tongue.
3. The vine-covered staff of Bacchus, used
to signify drunkenness; also, a symbol of
beauty, at a wine party.
4. In the sense of "natural philosophy," or sci-
ence. Benjamin Haydon tells in his Autobiogra-
phy how, at a high-spirited dinner party, Keats had agreed with Charles
Lamb (to what extent jokingly, it is not clear)
that Newton’s Optics had destroyed all the
theory of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic
colors.
5. Gnomes were guardians of mines.
6. Sacred to Venus, hence an emblem of love.
7. Deceiving, full of trickery.