

**The Entry of John Keats's Letters into Critical Discourse,
1836-1895**

Abolfazl Ramazani

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Department of English and Related Literature

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ABSTRACT

Charles Armitage Brown's lecture delivered on 27 December 1836 to the Plymouth Institution marks the first public use of Keats's letters in a critical estimate of Keats. It was only after the publication of Richard Monckton Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* (1848) that public awareness of Keats as an important English poet grew significantly. Out of 252 items in H. E. Rollins's edition of Keats's letters (1958), Milnes published 82 either in part or in full. For the first time, it became known to the reading public that Keats's letters and poems were closely related as the letters record, among other things, the process of Keats's poetic self-education. Thirty years later, Forman published thirty seven love-letters by Keats, documents that greatly altered contemporary understanding of Keats the man. Forman was aware that his edition risked creating a backlash against himself and his subject. Therefore, in his long introduction, which carries the hallmarks of meticulous scholarship and serious criticism, he introduces the letters, in a guarded manner, as 'sacred' documents that can only enhance Keats's reputation. Many reviewers of the love-letters considered them to be barren of literary value on the understanding that they were written when Keats the man was unwell and morbid in spirit. In 1878, a sufficient number of Keats's important letters were in the public domain for a fair estimate of them and their significance to be made. Milnes made use of Keats's letters to his family and friends to demonstrate the poet's noble character and to take issue with the picture of the poet as victim propagated by Byron and Shelley. The letters to Fanny Brawne provoked another unfavourable estimate of Keats's character and poetry as many critics, chief among them Arnold and Swinburne, saw traces of a feeble and dissolute nature in them: taking Keats's letters in Milnes's biography into serious consideration, Arnold

judged that Keats wrote great poetry because he had an elevated character. Arnold brushes aside the letters to Fanny Brawne and tries to compensate for their despairing sensuality by reference to aspects of Keats's manliness and gentlemanly behaviour in many other letters of the poet, from which he quotes. Arnold's analysis of Keats's character set a new course for future critics of the poet who strove in their own ways to show that Keats the man and Keats the poet were one. Like Arnold, Swinburne was of the opinion that a poet is great because he is a great human being; nevertheless he expressed a harsher criticism of Keats the man in his love-letters than that by Arnold. He did not object to the writing of the love-letters but wrote four aggressively critical sonnets on the occasion of the publication of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne*, in which he employs his considerable poetic resources to chastise and debase Buxton Forman for publishing them. In 1891, Colvin concluded that Keats's letters must be read and valued for their own intrinsic literary merits and that Keats the man and Keats the poet are one. After Robert Bridges's essay on Keats in 1895, Keats's sensuousness began to be looked upon as a virtue and a theme that formed the subject of many books and articles that appeared afterwards. Today, we owe our high estimate of the letters in their entirety as documents that rank in literary interest with the poems, to the editorial and critical tradition begun by Milnes (1848), Forman (1878 and 1895), and Colvin (1891).

INTRODUCTION

A. C. Bradley's chapter 'The Letters of Keats', written in a lively conversational style in 1905, is the first essay to explicate terms and phrases such as 'Negative Capability', 'Pleasure Thermometer', 'voyage of conception', 'Mansion of Many Apartments', 'A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence', 'The vale of Soul-making', and 'primitive sense'¹ and to emphasise that 'the letters throw light on all [poems]'.² Today no discussion of Keats's poetry is complete without a glance at the appropriate passages and critical remarks in the letters for the light they shed on the poems. In his essay on 'Shelley and Keats', T. S. Eliot writes that Keats's greatness lies in his letters because they are Shakespearian: 'The Letters [*sic*] are certainly the most notable and the most important ever written by any English poet. . . . [in them] the fine things come in unexpectedly, neither introduced nor shown out . . . [and so they] are of the finest quality of criticism, and the deepest penetration. . . . Keats's sayings about poetry, thrown out in the course of private correspondence, keep pretty close to intuition . . . [because he has a] poetic mind.'³ In his fine and influential essay, 'The Poet as

¹ From letters of 21, 27 (?) Dec. 1817 to George and Tom Keats, of 30 January 1818 to John Taylor, of 19 February 1818 to J. H. Reynolds, of 3 May 1818 to J. H. Reynolds, of 27 October 1818 to Richard Woodhouse, of 14 Feb-3 May 1819 to the George Keatses, and of 30 November 1820 to C. A. Brown in Robert Gittings, ed., *Letters of John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 42-3, 60, 65-67, 95, 157, 249, and 398 respectively. Hereafter *Gittings*. All subsequent references to Keats's letters are to this edition or to Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958) in the case of a letter not included by Gittings. Hereafter cited as *Rollins*.

² A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1909), 209-239. In his essay, first presented as a lecture in Oxford, he gives references to Colvin (1891) and Forman's (1895, 1901) editions of Keats's letters. I shall analyse the significance of these two sources in the process of the reception of Keats as poet and as man in the course of the thesis and in the Conclusion.

³ T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1933, 1959), 100-102. Hereafter *T. S. Eliot*.

Hero: Keats in his Letters', Lionel Trilling comments, '. . . even among the great artists Keats is perhaps the only one whose letters have an interest which is virtually equal to that of their writer's canon of created work.'⁴ Keats was 'the most Platonic of poets' (19); he had the ability to reach the top of 'the Platonic ladder of the appetites' by devices such as 'Negative Capability', 'empathy', and gradual rises in the poetic 'Pleasure Thermometer'. The aim is to seek unity with the essence, through the suspension of self and self-annihilation, because the true poet is selfless (23-33). So for Trilling the letters have a unique literary identity but also show a gradual construction of Keats the man's personality. John Barnard has Eliot and Trilling in mind when he remarks that 'among other things, the letters provide an account of the poet's development, and a portrait of the artist as a young man. They are part of the process by which Keats became a poet.'⁵ Timothy Webb takes issue with Barnard's assertion that the letters were written as 'a portrait of the artist' or 'as a whole'; nevertheless he admits that they 'could be read as in some ways analogous to the structures of an epistolary novel.'⁶ For Barnard, the letters are also 'a manifestation of the self-creating imagination'⁷ Fourteen years after making these remarks, in his 'Keats's letters: "Remembrancing and enchaining"' Barnard highlights Keats's theatricality and performative acts; he begins his article with a sentence that comprises the gist of his whole argument: 'all letters involve self-representation, even business letters.' In the

⁴ Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955), 3. Further references to the chapter in Trilling's book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

⁵ John Barnard, *John Keats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 144. Hereafter Barnard, *John Keats*.

⁶ Timothy Webb, "'Cutting Figures": Rhetorical Strategies in Keats's *Letters*' in *Keats: Bicentenary Readings* edited by Michael O'Neill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 145-6. Hereafter *Keats: Bicentenary Readings*.

⁷ Barnard, *John Keats* 144.

second paragraph of the article, he remarks, 'Keats's letters are also performances.'⁸ The letters are live productions that never lose their impressiveness. When the recipients read them they could imagine in what mental state Keats was, could visualise the place where he was sitting to write the letter, what clothes he was wearing, and what the general atmosphere of things around him was. The letters have wider implications and Keats wrote them with the possibility in mind that other friends than the addressee would also read them. Webb has, 'Keats was peculiarly sensitive to the imagined presence of the addressee and took steps to achieve a style and a mode which was appropriate both to the reader and to the occasion.'⁹ When Keats's correspondents *did* read his letters they felt as if they could see him speaking with them there and then. I say 'speaking with' and not 'speaking to' because Keats imagined their reply. The poet wrote the letters as if they would reach the addressees he kept in mind very quickly. He kept in mind what he imagined their reaction would be.¹⁰ Keats's method is reminiscent of today's email system by the use of which one expects a faster reply from the other side of the line or within a short period of time. For Greg Kucich, the atmosphere, the 'mental patterns, and the specific images, ideas, or rhetorical structures' of the letters dictate the composition of the poems in them, which 'share in the same activity of mind'.¹¹ Similarly Robert Pack notes that whenever there was a lapse in composing poetry Keats invented ideas and promoted thought in the letters to prepare the ground for poetic activity; 'many of the letters function as a catalyst for ideas which later are

⁸ John Barnard, 'Keats's letters: "Remembrancing and enchainings"' in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats* edited by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120. Hereafter *Cambridge Companion to Keats*.

⁹ *Keats: Bicentenary Readings* 161.

¹⁰ *Cambridge Companion to Keats* 128-133.

¹¹ Greg Kucich, 'The Poetry of Mind in Keats's Letters', *Style*, 21 (1987), 76-7. Hereafter *Kucich*.

realized in his greatest works.’¹² Conversely, he kept up little correspondence when his teeming mind was producing poems abundantly.¹³

Every major book on Keats contains at least a few lines on his letters. Many critics and commentators regard Keats’s letters in their entirety as the best commentary on his poems. Nowadays any syllabus designed for teaching Keats includes a consideration of his letters, especially the ones that have great literary value in themselves. Students of Keats are recommended to trace the development of Keats’s poetic maturity as recorded in the letters. Timothy Webb states that the letters are emerging as a yet greater challenge than the poems and ‘there is a great deal which may yet be said about the letters.’¹⁴ In the past 25 years, much has been said about Keats and history (including Keats and the periodical press of his time, Keats in the Cockney School of Poetry, and Keats and criticism), Keats and gender studies, Keats and sexuality, Keats and medicine, and Keats reading his contemporaries and vice versa, but as far as I am aware there is, at present, no study that focuses closely on the role of the poet’s letters in the history of Keats’s reputation as poet and as man. George Ford’s fine book *Keats and the Victorians: A Study of His Influence and Rise to Fame 1821-1895* (1962) takes as its focal point mainly the study of Keats’s influence on Victorian poets such as Tennyson, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, and others but it also stresses Keats’s debt to them. G. M. Matthews has an erudite introduction in his *Keats: The Critical Heritage* (1971), which shows the vicissitudes of Keats’s poetic fame from 1817-1900 but refers to the role of the letters only in passing. Similarly, MacGillivray’s

¹² Robert Pack, ‘Keats’s Letters: Laughter as Autobiography’, *New England Review & Bread Loaf Quarterly*, 7:2 (1984), 177.

¹³ *Kucich* 78-91.

¹⁴ *Keats: Bicentenary Readings* 144.

ambitious study, *Keats: A Bibliography and Reference Guide with an Essay on Keats' Reputation* (1949) deals with the letters in lines that hardly exceed two pages.¹⁵ By the time the first batch of letters appeared in Richard Monckton Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains* in 1848, Keats was a poet of reputation and several editions of his poems were available in the marketplace, yet there is little evidence of interest in the letters before 1848. The root of critics' interests in the letters as fascinating, enlightening, thought-provoking, autobiographical, and literary documents lie in the increase in their awareness of the value of Keats's letters in themselves after 1848; it took Keats's letters a period of some 60 years fully to enter critical discourse when a recognisably modern understanding of them was developed by Sidney Colvin in 1891.¹⁶ In this thesis, I have attempted to chart and evaluate this process for what it can tell us about how the modern understanding of Keats as man and as poet came about. My project studies the development of ideas of Keats's character, social position, and poetic fame largely in the light of the letters.

Chapter one, 'The Reception and Construction of John Keats 1817-1848', shows how, despite the popular assumption that the poems of John Keats have nothing to do with the concerns of history and politics, Tory reviewers were offended by what they considered his seditious, licentious, and subversive language in all three volumes of his poetry (1817, 1818, and 1820). The ridiculous portraits of 'Johnny Keats', and then 'pestleman Jack' in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, according to which Keats had better go back to the apothecary's profession than write poetry, had been known to the literary public for the last three years of the poet's life and then continued to influence

¹⁵ Full references to Ford's, Matthews's, and MacGillivray's books will be given during the course of the thesis and can be found in the bibliography.

¹⁶ Sidney Colvin, ed., *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1891). Hereafter Colvin, *Letters of Keats*.

serious readers' thinking about Keats's writings for the remainder of the first half of the nineteenth century up to the publication of the first major biography of the poet by Milnes in 1848. Attempts by Keats's friends such as Shelley in his *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc.* (1821) and Leigh Hunt in his *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828) to defend his character and personality went a long way to reclaim his fame because both gave a somewhat feminised portrayal of the poet as victim. Until the late 1840s, Keats was perceived through the screen of Byron and Shelley who portrayed him as a genius who fell victim to adverse reviewers. Keats was never famous during his lifetime, and only became so slowly thereafter. It was only after the publication of Richard Monckton Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats (LLLR)* which appeared in two volumes in 1848 that Keats was recognised as an important poet in nearly all the influential press and wider community.

Chapter two emphasises the central and historic role of Milnes's biography in presenting Keats as a poet to the world. Section I of Chapter two throws light on Milnes's literary activities and gives some flavour of his interest in the political and social events of his time, for example in the revolutions in 1830 and 1848 in France, the Irish potato famine of 1846 and his leaving the Tory Party for the Whigs. In Section II, I discuss in detail Milnes's editorial skills in trying to give a polished, modified, and socially acceptable image of Keats. In particular, I analyse the strategies he employs in order to build up a convincing portrayal of Keats's character for Victorian readers. Section III stresses that it is because of the impact of Lord Jeffrey's important August 1820 article in the *Edinburgh Review* (and its elaborated 1844 version) – as the only kindly, judicious, just and yet sufficiently severe criticism of Keats's *Endymion* – on the subsequent reception of Keats both as a poet and a moral being that Milnes dedicates his

biography of Keats to Jeffrey. It is here that I emphasise the fact that Milnes saw in the letters a process of self-education by which Keats's poetic mentality developed. The arrangement of the poems, though not in a strictly chronological order and separated from the context in which they were produced, in the 'Literary Remains' section of his book emphasises this process. In Section IV, 'Responses to *LLLR* in the periodicals, 1848-50', I discuss the view put forward by some reviews that Keats's letters are the best commentary on his character and poems. They are honest and spontaneous and show traces of noble thoughts; therefore they represent an honest person; they contain fine phrases of literary criticism and poetic imagination; therefore they reveal close association and affinity with the poems. What is also emphasised by some is the view that Keats's letters can be examined and read for themselves.

In Section I of Chapter three, I trace the history of the ownership and publication of the love-letters to Fanny Brawne. Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke published, for the first time, parts of one love-letter in 1875 and Lord Houghton parts of some six in the following year, before thirty seven of them were published by Harry Buxton Forman in 1878. Section II, 'Scandalous enterprise: Forman's *LJKFB*' is a discussion of the structure and extraordinary role of Forman's volume in the reception of Keats as poet and as man: the handsome make-up of the book (Title-page, Note, dedicatory note, silhouette, epigraph, portrait of Keats, facsimile of a love-letter, and appendices) intends to leave the maximum impression on the reader as regards the originality and dignity of the book; I stress that Forman would see the development of Keats's best poetry side by side with his moments of intense love for Fanny Brawne; that he was anxious to present the letters as 'sacred' documents in order to mitigate what he anticipated would be a scandal, in such a way that they would not only not damage Keats's reputation (by then high and safe) but also increase it.

Chapter four contains three sections that are interconnected and continue the development of arguments in the previous one. Section I, 'Responses to *LJKFB*' will stress that the publication of Keats's love letters was considered an offence to Keats's memory on three grounds: that it transgressed the customs and conventions governing privacy and publicity, that certain religious and moral codes necessary to society were violated by the publication, that the editor of the letters was vulgarly motivated by a desire for fame and gain. It would have been better, thought many, if Keats had poured out his agony and expressions of love in verse. In Section II, I point out that for Arnold, the first major critic who examines the whole of the letters, Keats was a great poet because he had shown traces of high character and conduct in his letters to friends and family. He dismisses the letters to Fanny Brawne altogether and endeavours to find compensation for aspects of Keats's sensuousness and sensuality in the other ones. A great poet, for Arnold, is necessarily a moral and dignified man in possession of a reserved gentlemanly character. I shall show in Section III that Swinburne, like Arnold, believed that a poet's greatness is the result of his great humanity; though he despises Keats's unmanliness in the love-letters he does not condemn Keats's writing of them; nevertheless, he plays a different role from that of Arnold in directing his anger against the editor of *LJKFB*.

The CONCLUSION follows the patterns of argument left by Arnold and Swinburne and reveals the editorial efforts of Forman (1883 and 1895) and Colvin (1891) to cast new and unprecedented light on the letters of Keats as interesting and valuable literary documents worthy of close attention in their own right and as indispensable texts of criticism for a fuller appreciation of Keats's poems. Bridges considered Keats's 'sensuousness' as a unique merit which was also celebrated by his

model Shakespeare. The Conclusion therefore prepares the ground for the development of the 20th century thematic and textual concern with the letters, which I have dealt with in the Introduction.

CHAPTER 1

THE RECEPTION AND CONSTRUCTION OF JOHN KEATS 1817-1848

It was through reading Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* that Keats became interested in civil and religious liberty.¹⁷ Keats was interested in the politics and current events of the day and when Leigh Hunt, having been sentenced for libel in the *Examiner* against the Prince Regent¹⁸, left prison, Keats wrote a sonnet on him called 'Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt Left Prison' and later published it in his first volume of poetry, *Poems*, which appeared in April 1817. In October 1817, six months after the publication of the first volume of poems, John Gibson Lockhart, adopting the pseudonym, 'Z', launched his first attack on Keats in the notorious article, 'On the Cockney School of Poetry No. I,' in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.¹⁹ Whether as a result of this review or not, Keats's *Poems* never went to a second edition in his lifetime: the word had circulated that its author was a radical and a Jacobin because, apart from the sonnet dedicated to Hunt, many poems in the volume showed the older poet's influence, and he was thought by many to be a radical and a devoted partisan of the first Napoleon. It was therefore at once assumed by the critics that 'Keats was not

¹⁷ Charles Cowden Clarke, 'Recollections of John Keats', *Gentleman's Magazine* (February 1874), 177-204. Hereafter 'Recollections of John Keats'.

¹⁸ Hunt recalls, 'the attorney-general's eye was swiftly upon the article; and the result to the proprietors [Hunt and his brother John] was two years' imprisonment [Feb. 1813—Feb. 1815], with a fine, to each, of five hundred pounds.' Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, edited and with an introduction and notes by J. E. Morpurgo (London: The Cresset Press, 1948), 230, 236. Hereafter cited as *Autobiography of Hunt*.

¹⁹ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (October 1817), 38-41. This journal developed the same topic in the subsequent issues of (November 1817) 194-201, (May 1818) [criticism of *Endymion*] 196-201, (July 1818) 453-456, (August 1818) 519-524, (April 1819) 97-100, (October 1819) 70-74.

only a bad poet, but a bad citizen.'²⁰ Such an association was enough to make the reviewers of the time suspect Keats of sedition by interpreting his words in a strictly political sense without regard for nuances of meaning.²¹

Keats's *Endymion* appeared at the end of April 1818 following the appearance of Leigh Hunt's *Foliage* in February of the same year. This was an unfortunate time for the close appearance of the two works, since any hostile criticism of *Foliage* might include *Endymion* too. A direct connection between the two poets was made in the May 1818 issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The notoriously abusive and malicious criticism of *Endymion* that it contains, in which Keats is referred to as the 'amiable but infatuated bardling,' a Cockney poet, a supporter and friend of a writer and editor who consistently expressed anti-establishment views, Leigh Hunt, was widely recognised to be by John Gibson Lockhart. The argument in this review was that the long poem, together with Keats's earlier *Poems*, were marked by the same amorality and sexual licence as Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*, a poem which he had composed while

²⁰ Richard Monckton Milnes, *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1848), i 195. Hereafter *LLLR*.

²¹ Matthews states that Hunt was 'Keats's earliest, most generous, and most constant champion, although by an unlucky irony his championship . . . caused most of Keats's troubles and came to put a severe strain on their friendship, because he was the editor of *Examiner*, a radical weekly that was a rival to the conservative reviews and 'at war both with the governing classes and their standards of literary taste.' See G. M. Matthews, ed., *Keats: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 41. Hereafter cited as *The Critical Heritage*. Hunt was never silenced by the Tory reviewers even after his imprisonment. Observe, for example, Lockhart's ongoing hatred of Leigh Hunt in his contemptuous letter to Hunt in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (January 1818, p. 415) where he says: 'I mean to . . . relieve my main attack upon you, by a diversion against some of your younger and less important auxiliaries, the Keateses [*sic*], the Shellys [*sic*], and the Webbs [*sic*]' and its May 1818 issue where, on page 196, Hunt is referred to as 'King of the Cockneys.' J. R. MacGillivray, *Keats: A Bibliography and Reference Guide with an Essay on Keats' Reputation* (University of Toronto Press, 1949), xix. Hereafter *MacGillivray*.

in Horse-monger Lane Jail for the libel against the Prince Regent.²² The January 1818 issue of the *Quarterly* appeared five months late in June and included a destructive review of Hunt's *Foliage*, some threatening glances at Shelley and one reference to Keats's *Endymion*. In that year the *British Critic* in its June number praised the poem sarcastically while asserting that it was a concatenation of worn out materials and pseudo-mythological stories. Then, the August issue of *Blackwood's* attacked the poet severely and so did the belated April issue of the *Quarterly Review* in September. The former attacked Keats by way of his medical training, calling him an apothecary poet, a person who knew no Greek, who had read Homer in translation as a preparation for writing on classical themes, and censured him for writing poems in honour of Hunt. The latter frankly condemned Keats's poetry as worth nothing, claiming in addition that he displayed ignorance about his own deficiencies and faults. At this stage, the broad intention of these reviewers was to show that Keats's poetry ran against the accepted literary taste of the time. Specifically, his poetry was criticised as being full of affectation, extravagance, vulgarity, obscurity, and quaintness; it was a poetry that did not conform to those literary norms of the day which the Tory reviewers had helped to define and generally admired.²³

²² *MacGillivray* xvii. The July 1818 issue of the magazine focussed on Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*, targeting his political views and attacking him as, among other things, a libertine, seditionist, ignoramus, and coxcomb. Nicholas Roe argues that 'the "Places of nestling green, for poets made" in Canto III of Hunt's *Story of Rimini* were the resorts of natural feeling, justice, and imaginative life excoriated in *Blackwood's Magazine*;' he goes on to say that green imagery in Keats's and Hunt's poems denoted seditious and oppositional values represented in public life by the 'moving grove' of the reformers in Henry Hunt's procession. See Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1997), 134. Hereafter *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent*. See note 175 on page 67 for more information on Henry Hunt.

²³ Keats had attacked the neoclassical mode of writing poetry, and by implication that of Alexander Pope, in particular in *Sleep and Poetry*. Moreover, *MacGillivray* points out how the early poetry might have been received: ' . . . in 1815-1816, Keats was without the skill to write good society verse, and temperamentally he lacked as yet both the wit and the air of graceful detachment commonly displayed in the genre. Awkward phrases and false rhymes, inflated expressions of admiration for literary friends of doubtful

The mockery of Keats's poetry continued into the time when his third volume was published in July 1820 and thereafter. The *Literary Chronicle* found Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Bards of Passion' worth attention but condemned the volume generally as suffering from quaint expressions, newly-coined words, and an overly-condensed language.²⁴ Baldwin's *London Magazine* found the poems obscure and quaint, because they displayed confused expressions and suggestive language instead of clear-cut phrases.²⁵ Indeed, one reason why Keats's poetry continued to be branded as awkward, esoteric and even unintelligible was that the prevalent taste of the age was not in tune with the use of such concentrated language.²⁶ The *Monthly Review*, returning to the controversial subject of Cockney education, condemned Keats's association with the so-called Cockney 'school of poetry'. This periodical praised Keats's third volume as showing 'the ore of true poetic genius' but deplored the fact that in Keats's 'small coterie', the 'intricacies of thought', the peculiarities of narration, the ambiguity of phrases, and the violation of the established 'poetic decorum' and 'manner' were all considered 'virtues'.²⁷ Furthermore, the themes of Keats's poetry

importance, a tendency toward effeminate gushing about the delights of 'poesy' and suburban 'leafy luxuries,' a frequent quasi-elegance of phrase, and an occasional jaunty vulgarity: all might be mistaken for the art of a Cockney Della Cruscan. Unfortunately much of the verse written at this time was to be included a year later in the 1817 volume (there would hardly have been enough for a volume without it).' *MacGillivray* xv.

²⁴ *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* (July 29, 1820), 484-5.

²⁵ *London Magazine* (Baldwin's) (September 1820), 315-21.

²⁶ Hunt records that Byron 'asked me what was the meaning of a beaker "full of the warm south."' It was not the word beaker that puzzled him: College had made him intimate enough with that. But the sort of poetry in which he excelled, was not accustomed to these poetical concentrations.' Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), i 438. Hereafter *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*.

²⁷ *Monthly Review* (July 1820), 305-10, reprinted in Donald H. Reiman, ed, *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers, Part C: Shelley, Keats, and London Radical Writers*, 2 vols (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972), ii 705-708. Hereafter *The Romantics Reviewed: Part C*.

were attacked. The reviewers did not like the use to which Keats put Greek mythology in his poems in the nineteenth century, thinking it unwise to impart such human feelings and passions to the ancient gods. *Blackwood's* labelled Keats's poetry 'Greekish' and Jeffrey thought of it as showing an inauthentic and invented 'Pagan mythology'.²⁸

The representation of Keats's poetry as disgusting to established taste sowed the seeds of resentment and mental obsession in him, damaged the sale of his works²⁹ and left him in financial straits. It will be seen that the majority of Keats's friends believed that Keats was infected with consumption by his brother, Tom,³⁰ but that the savage criticism of his works had hastened his death and, in that sense, he had been the victim of the Tory reviewers.³¹ Moreover, it was also felt that, because of the reviewers' abusive criticism of his poetry and their widespread campaign of denigration against him, Keats's death passed almost unnoticed, so little known and so slightly esteemed was he at the time.³² For all these reasons, the literary public and, therefore, people in

²⁸ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (October 1822), 479 and *Edinburgh Review* (August 1820), 203-13.

²⁹ Olive M. Taylor, 'John Taylor, Author and Publisher, 1781-1864,' in *London Mercury* (July 1925), 259. Hereafter 'John Taylor, Author and Publisher, 1781-1864.'

³⁰ Sir George Newman, *John Keats: Apothecary and Poet* (Sheffield: T. Booth, 1921), 12, and Hillas Smith, *Keats and Medicine* (Newport, Isle of Wight: Cross publishing, 1995), 26. Hereafter *Keats and Medicine*.

³¹ 'Recollections of John Keats', 195 and Sidney Colvin, *John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After-fame* (London: MacMillan And Co., Limited, 1920), 516. Hereafter *Sidney Colvin*.

³² Charles Armitage Brown, *Life of John Keats*, edited with an introduction and notes by D. H. Bodurtha and W. B. Pope (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937), 4. Hereafter Brown, *Life of Keats* and Edmund Blunden, *Keats's Publisher: A Memoir of John Taylor (1781-1864)* (London, 1936), 89. Hereafter *Keats's Publisher*.

general had failed to recognise his genius, even long after his death.³³ They had not noticed that he, at least, had shown a great development from the publication of the first volume of his poetry in 1817 till that of the third in 1820. The Tory journals were major sources of opinion of those days and had an influential role in fashioning and forming the ideas of the reading public, and what they said was accepted by many people who read them.³⁴ The ridiculous portraits of ‘Johnny Keats’³⁵, and then ‘pestleman Jack’³⁶ in *Blackwood’s*, according to which Keats had better go back to the apothecary’s profession than write poetry, were circulated among the literary public for the last three years of the poet’s life and then continued to influence serious readers’ thinking about Keats’s writings for the remainder of the first half of the nineteenth century up to the publication of the first major biography of the poet by Milnes in 1848.

The early death of Keats prompted his friends and acquaintances to consider that his reputation and achievement should be defended, by telling the story of his life so as to unveil the brutality of his reviewers - in a memoir first, a biography later on.³⁷ There

³³ Joseph Severn records that few Englishmen were interested in reading Keats’s work in Rome and they couldn’t be persuaded to do that, because, there was a ‘prejudice against him as a poet’. When Keats’s ‘gravestone was placed, with his own expressive line, “Here lies one whose name was writ in water,” then a host started up . . . of scoffers, and a silly jest was often repeated in my hearing, “Here lies one whose name was writ in water, and *his works in milk and water*”; and this I was condemned to hear for years repeated, as though it had been a pasquinade.’ See Joseph Severn’s ‘On the Vicissitudes of Keats’s Fame’ in *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1863), 404. Hereafter ‘On the Vicissitudes of Keats’s Fame’ and William Sharp, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* (London, Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1892), 250. Hereafter, *Life of Severn*.

³⁴ In a letter to his father written on 31 January 1822, John Taylor reminds us that, ‘. . . the Flam of Blackwood . . . [is] more suited it seems to the Taste of the Age.’ ‘John Taylor, Author and Publisher, 1781-1864,’ 264.

³⁵ *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (Sept. 1820), 675.

³⁶ *Ibid.* xiv (July 1823), 67.

³⁷ *MacGillivray* xxxvii.

was, however, no unanimous view on who should write the memoir because different friends had different views of the truth of Keats's death.³⁸ John Taylor, Charles Armitage Brown, Charles Cowden Clarke, and Shelley at different periods of time in 1821 were consulted to write a memoir of Keats.³⁹ John Taylor, the publisher of Keats's 1820 volume, as early as February 19, 1821 -- four days before Keats's death -- said that it was George Keats who had been the cause of his brother's predicament, because he had borrowed money from Keats when he had come to England to raise funds and that this had left his brother penniless in the last year of his life.⁴⁰ This does not mean that he underplayed the role of the reviewers in the tragic death of Keats. On 28 March 1821 - two weeks after news of Keats's death reached London - Taylor wrote to his brother James:

'Perhaps you have not heard of the death of poor Keats. He died three days before his defender Scott. This ought to be another Blow to the Hearts of these Blackwood's Men. . . . I shall have Occasion to speak of the Treatment he has met with from the Race of Critics and Lamponers.'⁴¹

In the same letter, Taylor expresses Keats's wish to be remembered after his death in a biography written on him. Southey had contributed to Kirke White's after-fame by

³⁸ *Keats's Publisher* 89.

³⁹ *Ibid.* xxxviii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 81 and 84-6 and 'John Taylor, Author and Publisher, 1781-1864,' 259.

⁴¹ Brown, *Life of Keats* 5. John Scott (1783-1821), the editor of *The London Magazine* sharply attacked the series of articles on 'The Cockney School of Poetry' appearing in the *Blackwood's Magazine* under the signature 'Z'. Keats had been cruelly ridiculed by this anonymous author. John Gibson Lockhart, a leading contributor to *Blackwood's*, was the chief object of Scott's attack; J. H. Christie, Lockhart's friend, challenged Scott to a duel, which was fought on February 16, 1821 at Chalk Farm, near London. Scott died four days after Keats's death - and not three as Taylor says - on February 27 as the result of the wound he received. See 'On the Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame', 403 and *Keats's Publisher* 81.

prefixing a judicious and informative memoir to his *Remains*.⁴² In consequence, readers commemorated White as a writer who had died of consumption and mental anguish in 1806.⁴³ This was an important issue of the time, and in the same way Keats's fame could be revived. In May 1821, Taylor asked for Benjamin Bailey's cooperation to let him know about his correspondence with John Keats. He agreed on the understanding that Taylor would not mention his name in his writing. In April 1821, Joseph Severn and Richard Abbey were consulted. In August 1821, Taylor wrote to Severn that he would start the job of writing the memoir in the coming winter.⁴⁴ But the project was attacked by Brown who had seen Taylor's announcement in the *Morning Chronicle*.⁴⁵ Brown thought that Taylor was a mere bookseller who did not understand Keats's character and his poetry, therefore, he was not the right person to undertake the task of writing the memoir. Reynolds disagreed, but Hunt, Dilke, and Richards were of the same opinion. As a result, no memoir was published by Taylor, nor by Charles Cowden Clarke who had been reported to be writing one, nor by Brown who had been thinking of compiling Keats's remains to give his own account of the poet's life.⁴⁶ The issue of writing a memoir on Keats was postponed till 1829 when Brown thought that time was ripe to bring up the idea once again. This will be followed up later.

⁴² Robert Southey, ed., *The Remains of H. K. White* [With an account of his life] (1808).

⁴³ *Keats's Publisher* 89-90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 91-92.

⁴⁵ According to Edmund Blunden, this announcement could not have occurred sooner than June 4th, 1821: 'Speedily will be published, with a portrait, *Memoirs and Remains of John Keats*. Printed for Taylor and Hessey, Fleet Street. Of whom may be had, *Endymion*; a Poetic Romance, by John Keats, 8vo. 9s. *Lamia, Isabella*, and other Poems, by John Keats, 7s. 6d.' *Keats's Publisher* 93.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 94.

Though *Blackwood's* had conducted a longer series of attacks on Keats's poetry, it was the *Quarterly* that was to be singled out as the principal agent of the death of Keats's reputation because the effects of the review of *Endymion* were regarded as more poisonous than the other reviews. Shelley's animosity towards the *Quarterly* and his defence of Keats against its venomous attack on *Endymion*⁴⁷ had started even before Keats's death and the publication of *Adonais*. At the time, Shelley had himself recently suffered from a personally hostile review in the *Quarterly*⁴⁸. In a letter of November 1820 to the editor, William Gifford, he writes:

Should you cast your eye on the signature of this letter before you read the contents you might imagine that they related to a slanderous paper which appeared in your review some time since. I never notice anonymous attacks. . . . I am not in the habit of permitting myself to be disturbed by what is said or written of me, though I dare say I may be condemned sometimes justly enough. . . . Poor Keats was thrown into a dreadful state of mind by this review, which I am persuaded was not written with any intention of producing the effect, to which it has at least greatly contributed, of embittering his existence, & inducing a disease from which there are now but faint hopes of his recovery.—The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, & it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs, & the usual process of consumption appears to have begun. He is coming to pay me a visit in Italy; but I fear that unless his mind can be kept tranquil little is to be hoped from the mere influence of the climate.—⁴⁹

The interesting point about Shelley's letter is that it establishes two orders of cause for Keats's death, physical and mental, giving symptomatic and rhetorical priority to the

⁴⁷ The review of Keats's *Endymion*, by John Wilson Croker, appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1818.

⁴⁸ A review of *Laon and Cythna (The Revolt of Islam)* in the April 1819 issue by J. T. Coleridge.

⁴⁹ Frederick L. Jones, ed., *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), ii 251-252. Hereafter cited as *Letters of Shelley*. On 22 June 1820, the Gisbornes were at Hunt's where they saw Keats too. On that day, he had suffered two episodes of blood-spitting. The Gisbornes reported Keats's predicament to Shelley in Pisa. See, for example, note 3 in *Letters of Shelley* ii 252.

latter. The initiating circumstance of Keats's illness was agony of mind and his hopes of recovery lay in restoring mental tranquillity.

After Keats's death, it was Robert Finch who gave an account of what he had heard from Joseph Severn about Keats's last days, to John Gisborne who, in return, enclosed the information in a letter of June 13, 1821, to the Shelleys.⁵⁰ Shelley's letter in reply to John Gisborne on 16 June 1821 reverberates with his resentment of base Tory reviewers who had killed a 'great genius'. He announces that he has written an elegy on the death of Keats in which he has '... dipped [his] pen in consuming fire for his destroyers, otherwise the style is calm & solemn.'⁵¹ Retaining almost exactly the same thematic pattern, in a letter to Claire Clairmont on the same day, he talks of his wish 'to chastise . . . destroyers' of 'poor Keats' in the elegy which he has recently finished and is ready to send to the press in Pisa for publication.⁵² Apart from these two letters written after Keats's death, Shelley had previously expressed his bitterness at the Tory reviewers to Byron, as well. This was a letter of April 16, 1821 in which he had

⁵⁰ Some noteworthy parts of Robert Finch's letter to John Gisborne are as follows:

[Keats was] . . . brooding over the most melancholy and mortifying reflections, and nursing a deeply-rooted disgust to life and to the world, owing to having been infamously treated by the very persons whom his generosity had rescued from want and woe His passions were always violent, and his sensibility most keen. It is extraordinary that, proportionally as his strength of body declined, these acquired fresh vigour, and his temper at length became so outrageously violent as to injure himself, and annoy every one around him. He eagerly wished for death For many weeks previous to his death he would see no one but Mr. Severn, who had almost risked his own life by unwearied attendance upon his friend, who rendered his situation doubly unpleasant by the violence of his passions, exhibited even towards him, so much that he might be judged insane. His intervals of remorse, too, were poignantly bitter. *Ibid.* ii 300.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* ii 300.

⁵² *Ibid.* ii 302.

accused the *Quarterly* of 'a contemptuous attack' on Keats's poetry which filled the poet with rage and melancholy and brought forward his death.⁵³ Though Byron showed sympathy towards Keats's fate and resented his predicament, he nevertheless was sceptical about Keats's supposed death at the hands of the reviewers. Replying to Shelley he had written: 'I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing.'⁵⁴ Byron's broad view of Keats and his poetry had affinities with the general opinion of the reviewers. Moreover, Byron believed that the cause of his damaged reputation was his devoted association with '*that second-hand school of poetry*' which was '*no school*' and the fact that he had been brought up and nursed in that school and, therefore, compromised his talents by composing 'Cockney' rhymes. Byron's pity for Keats's fate might have been an authentic and genuine feeling but his anger at Keats's rejection of Pope's style of writing was never appeased.⁵⁵

However, Shelley was strong in the belief that the reviewers killed Keats, so making an indirect connection between sensitivity, vulnerability and creative powers which was usual with him. In a letter to Lord Byron dated May 4, 1821, he goes on to confirm his previous position, telling Byron that Hunt, too, believed in the fatal role of the reviewers.⁵⁶ Shelley's view on Keats's death became public a few weeks later in his

⁵³ *Ibid.* ii 284.

⁵⁴ Leslie A Marchand, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 12 vols (London: John Murray, 1973- 1982), viii 103. Hereafter *Byron's Letters and Journals*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* viii 104. Keats had attacked eighteenth-century poetry as a whole - without naming A. Pope - in lines 181-206 of *Sleep and Poetry*.

⁵⁶ 'The account of Keats is, I fear, too true. Hunt tells me that in the first paroxysms of his disappointment he burst a blood-vessel; and thus laid the foundation of a rapid consumption. There can be no doubt but that the irritability which exposed him to this catastrophe was a pledge of future sufferings, had he lived. And yet this argument does not reconcile me to the employment of the contemptuous and wounding expressions

preface to *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc.*, in July 1821⁵⁷, six months after Keats died, in the preface to which he insisted on the *Quarterly Review* as the real villain of the narrative of persecuted and sensitive genius.⁵⁸ By December of the same year, 'Adonais and its inflammatory Preface had created a critical controversy around Shelley and the elegised Keats'.⁵⁹ People who were struck by the news of Keats's death were free to take Shelley's version of events as Gospel, believing that Keats died because of the grief and agony he felt in his heart from the unfair criticism of his poetry. Many did. But, it should be stressed that Shelley's is a polemical hypothesis which serves literary purposes and hardly the whole truth. Keats's consumptive disposition must be taken into consideration: he suffered his first haemorrhage only in February 1820 and, prior to that time, his letters make only infrequent references to the Tory journals - the *Quarterly Review* in particular. He had other sources of suffering in September and October 1818.⁶⁰

against a man merely because he has written bad verses; or, as Keats did, some good verses in a bad taste.' *Letters of Shelley* ii 289.

⁵⁷ Schwartz records that *Adonais* was 'privately printed at Pisa on or before July 13, 1821'. See Lewis M. Schwartz, *Keats Reviewed By His Contemporaries: A Collection of Notices for the Years 1816-1821* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1973), 325. Hereafter *Schwartz*.

⁵⁸ 'The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wounds thus wantonly inflicted.' PREFACE to *Adonais* in Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers, eds., *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 391. Hereafter cited as *P and P*.

⁵⁹ *Schwartz* 325-6.

⁶⁰ Keats's major mental preoccupation at this time seems to have been his anxiety over his ill brother Tom who subsequently died on 1 December 1818.

Shelley's purpose in *Adonais* is twofold: to expose to the literary public the truth behind Keats's death and then, by redeeming that death from its physical cause, to celebrate the eternity of Keats's genius. However, his anger at the ruthlessness of the *Quarterly* may in the longer term have done more harm to the deceased poet than to the relentless reviewer. As Susan Wolfson remarks, because the elegy was a 'text that immediately achieved canonical status in the story and critical history of Keats,' it left⁶¹ the secondary impression on readers' minds that Keats had been, from the very outset, a feeble, touchy and sentimental person; that he lacked the robustness to bear the hostile invective of the reviews one might expect to face during one's literary career. *Adonais* was not only read as the vindication of the eternal character of Keats's poetry through Shelley's mythologising of him but as the vindication of Keats the man 'as a type unable to suffer the slings and arrows of critical fortune.'⁶² It is true that the cause of Keats's physical death was consumption, but, at least until the late 1840s, Keats was perceived through the screen of Shelley's legend, and this portrayed him as having been literally consumed by the reviewers. It is interesting to note that Keats's doctor too had a similar assessment to Shelley's of the effect of literary anxiety on Keats's death – that Keats's excessive turbulence of mind over issues like 'love and fame' had caused his first haemorrhage in February 1820.⁶³ In this regard, John Hamilton Reynolds also believed that Keats was 'too sensitive' and therefore was destroyed by the reviewers.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Keats Enters History: Autopsy, *Adonais*, and the Fame of Keats' in *Keats and History* edited by Nicholas Roe (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18. Hereafter cited as *Wolfson*.

⁶² *Ibid.* 19

⁶³ *MacGillivray* xxxv and *Keats and Medicine* 111. Keats fell in love with Fanny Brawne at the end of 1818 and was obsessed with the success of his third volume, the only chance to revive his reputation and bring him the fame and fortune to marry her.

⁶⁴ Reynolds believed that Keats's '... intense mind and powerful feeling would, I truly believe, have done the world some service, had his life been spared—but he was of too sensitive a nature—and thus he was destroyed!' Then he goes on to say that Keats's

Hazlitt, too, in his essay 'On Living to One's-Self', further popularised the theme that Keats was a delicate being who could not face the scoffing of the world.⁶⁵ Charles Cowden Clarke shared Hazlitt's view by reporting Keats's 'sensitive [*sic*] bitterness of the unfair treatment he had experienced.'⁶⁶ Of course, from 1819 onwards Keats was ill and it is evident that from that time on he could well have grown more sensitive and hyper-conscious of injury. Fanny Brawne, who had known Keats well for two years and witnessed his last days in England, believed that he had been 'murdered, for that is the case, by the mere malignity of the world'⁶⁷

Apart from being a 'highly wrought piece of art,' *Adonais* had profound repercussions on how Keats and his poetry were perceived. It helped fashion the idea that

Keats had died before his promise had been fulfilled . . . for half a century the appreciation of Keats's poems remained an affair of passionate cultivation by small groups of individuals. Public comment

Isabella is 'the most pathetic poem in existence!' See the preface to John Hamilton Reynolds' *The Garden of Florence and Other Poems* (London: John Warren, 1821), xi-xii. Hereafter *The Garden of Florence*. The phrase 'have done the world some service' must be an allusion to *Othello*, V. ii. 406, 'I have done the state some service, and they know't.'

⁶⁵ 'Poor Keats! What was sport to the town, was death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

*"A bud bit by an envious worm,
Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun"--*

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes.' [The quotation is from *Romeo and Juliet* I i 142- 4] See P. P. Howe, ed., *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 21 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1930- 4), viii 99. Hereafter *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*.

⁶⁶ Schwartz 329.

⁶⁷ *Letters of Fanny Brawne to Fanny Keats (1820-1824)*, edited with a biographical introduction by Fred Edgecumbe (London, Oxford University Press, 1936), 15. Hereafter *Letters of FB to FK*.

was on his life and death; on the iniquity of reviewers; on the rich promise wasted; and on the many beauties to be found among many faults.⁶⁸

Adonais's characteristic procedure was also to vindicate the poet's genius. In a letter to Byron written on 16 July 1821, Shelley had admitted that Keats surpassed him in genius.⁶⁹ The elegy pointed out the fact that while Keats could not be viewed as a prolific writer whose reputation could rest on substantial complete works, he was certainly a *promising* poet who had created a few masterpieces as well as isolated passages of brilliance as an earnest of what would have been. And, because of the ongoing criticism of Keats in *Blackwood's*, Shelley must have feared that Keats would never become famous. He explained his estimate of Keats's chances of ever obtaining a large number of readers in a letter to Joseph Severn of November 29, 1821 accompanying a volume of *Adonais*:

In spite of his transcendant [*sic*] genius Keats never was nor ever will be a popular poet, & the total neglect & obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still lie, was hardly to be dissipated by a writer, who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity. I have little hope therefore that the Poem I send you will excite any attention nor do I feel assured that a critical notice of his writings would find a single reader.⁷⁰

Shelley's lack of hope in the popularity of Keats's poetry was well justified when one realises that every attempt to defend Keats, from the publication of his first volume of poetry until the late 1830s, provoked a harsh treatment from the Tory reviewers: the review of Shelley's *Adonais* by *Blackwood's* was one of mock-pity mixed with indignation and ridicule:

⁶⁸ *The Critical Heritage* 3.

⁶⁹ *Letters of Shelley* ii 309.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* ii 366.

Weep for my Tomcat! all ye Tabbies weep,
 For he is gone at last! Not dead alone,
 In flowery beauty sleepeth he no sleep;
 Like that bewitching youth Endymion!⁷¹

As already mentioned, Byron came to be both sceptical and sarcastic about the myth of Keats's death by an article. But, because of the high frequency of the reports of Keats's death as hastened by the reviewers, he himself, like Shelley, was prepared to accept this as the cause of Keats's demise in his own invented myth. Therefore, retaining the same sceptical mood and assuming a jocular tone, in a letter to John Murray, the *Quarterly's* publisher, written on 30 July 1821, he inquires if he is aware 'that Shelley has written an elegy on Keats -- and accuses the *Quarterly* of killing him.' He then challenges the pattern with his own:

Who killed John Keats?
 I, says the the *Quarterly*
 So savage & Tartarly
 < Martyrly >
 'Twas one of my feats –
 Who < drew the [pen?] > shot the arrow?
 The poet-priest Milman
 (So ready to kill man)
 Or Southey or Barrow.—⁷²

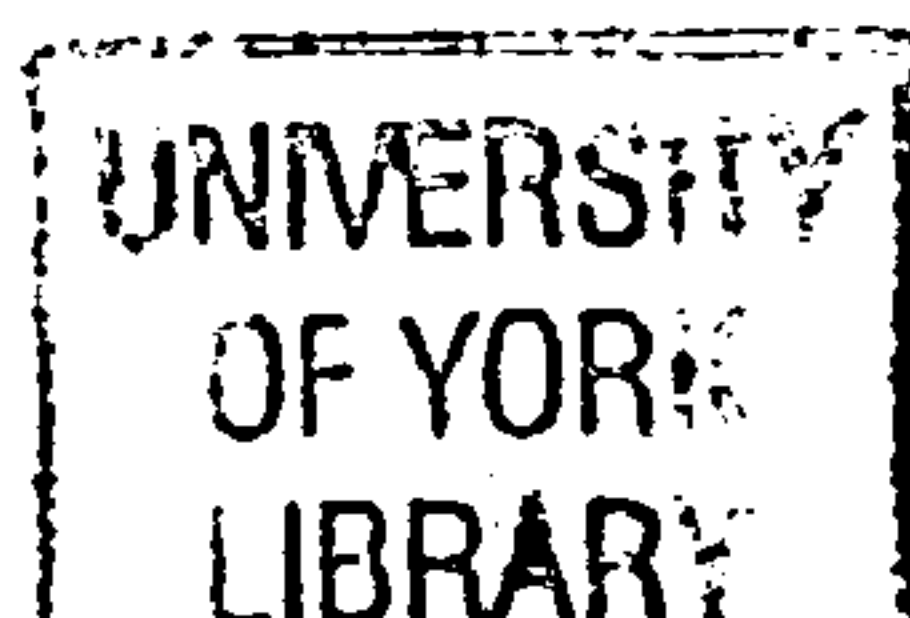
Byron was the first to rewrite the story of Keats's death not as mock-elegy but as burlesque nursery-rhyme. His elegiac stanza in 1823 in *Don Juan* (XI.lx), though

⁷¹ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (December 1821), 696-700.

⁷² *Byron's Letters and Journals* viii 163. Byron's elegy on the death of Keats originates in the 14-stanza nursery rhyme of 'Who killed Cock Robin?'. The first stanza of this rhyme reads:

Who killed Cock Robin?
 I, said the sparrow,
 With my bow and arrow,
 I killed Cock Robin.

The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes edited by Iona and Peter Opie (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 130.



clearly sceptical in nature, acquired an influence similar to that of Shelley's poem and contributed to the prevalent myth of Keats's death:⁷³

John Keats, who was killed off by one critique,
 Just as he really promised something great,
 If not intelligible,-- without Greek
 Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,
 Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
 Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate:--
 'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
 Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.⁷⁴

Byron's scepticism at the myth of Keats's death at the hands of the reviewers and the comedy that he extracts from what he considers naive testify to the persistence of the idea that he debunks.

I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the object of the *Quarterly Review* was to expose the so-called vulgarity of Keats's poetry, which was characterised by affectation and deviation from the widely accepted mode and tone of neoclassical poetry, whereas Lockhart's ridicule and ribaldry targeted the young poet's poor education, low social class, humble parentage, and radical friends.

Blackwood's conducted a nonstop campaign of condescending vilification against Keats, before and after his death. In the September 1820 issue of the journal, its reviewers advertised their impatience at seeing the members of the Cockney School of Poetry regarded as authors. They claimed that they might have liked these people as individual human beings but not in the important career of authorship as a profession. They were 'vermin' if they wanted to appear in 'the shape of authors.'⁷⁵ The only

⁷³ *The Critical Heritage* 16 and *Wolfson* 29.

⁷⁴ Jerome J. McGann, ed., *Byron: A Critical Edition of His Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 735. Hereafter *Byron*.

⁷⁵ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vii (September 1820), 686-7.

words uttered by *Blackwood's* on the first anniversary of Keats's death showed their sardonic humour mixed with a tight ration of praise:

Poor Keates! I cannot pass his name without saying that I really think he had some genius about him. I do think he had something that might have ripened into fruit, had he made not such a mumbling work of the buds—something that might have been wine, and tasted like wine, if he had not kept dabbling with his fingers in the vat, and pouring it out and calling lustily for quaffers, before the grounds had time to be settled, or the spirit to be concentrated, or the flavour to be formed.⁷⁶

The above quotation targets Keats's immaturity and lack of experience in composing polished and well-founded verses. But the cause of the irritation displayed may also be an awareness that Shelley's elegy on Keats's death had exerted some influence on the reading public in general; it had received immediate attention after Keats's death and was becoming widely known in Britain. *Blackwood's*, with its high frequency of articles on the 'Cockney School of Poetry', had in consequence to choose either to confess that it had had a hand in killing Keats or to hide itself under the *Quarterly's* shelter, so that it could claim, if need be, that, at least, it had always noticed and given some praise to Keats's genius.⁷⁷

Like Byron, *Blackwood's* was dismissive of the myth of Keats's death by hostile reviews. Defending themselves against *Adonais's* charges and wishing to unravel the truth about Keats being snuffed out by a conservative article, *Blackwood's* argued:

Signor Z, whoever he be, gibbeted [*sic*] everlastingly Hunt, Hazlitt, Keats, Webb, and all the Cockney school. Has anyone dared to take them down from that bad eminence? Have they dared to shew their faces in decent society, branded as they are on the countenance with that admirable adapted title? Have not their books been obliged to skulk from the tables of gentlemen, where they might formerly have been seen, into the fitting company of washerwomen, merchants' clerks, ladies of easy virtue, and mythological young gentlemen, who fill the agreeable office

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* xi (March 1822), 346.

⁷⁷ *The Critical Heritage* 22.

of ushers at boarding-schools? What is the reason that they sunk under it? Because they were, are, and ever will be, ignorant pretenders, without talent or information All the clamour about cruel criticism is absurd—it will do no harm to the mighty,—and as for the pigmies [*sic*], let them be crushed for daring to tread where none but the mighty should enter. . . . As for malignity, &c. it is almost all cant. . . . The majority who criticise, do so to raise the wind, not caring whether they are right or wrong,—or they are fellows of fun, who cut up an author with whom they would sit down five minutes after, over a bowl of punch. . . . As to people being killed by it, that is the greatest trash of all . . . lately, Johnny Keats was cut up in the *Quarterly*, for writing about Endymion what no mortal could understand, and this says Mr Shelly [*sic*] doctored the apothecary. . . . Is there any man who believed such stuff? Keats, in publishing his nonsense, knew that he was voluntarily exposing himself to all sort and manner of humbugging; and when he died, if his body was opened, I venture to say that no part of his animal economy displayed any traces of the effects of criticism. God rest him, to speak with our brethren of the Church of Rome;—I am sorry he is dead, for he often made me laugh at his rubbish of verse, when he was alive.⁷⁸

This style of mockery was maintained in the following years. Exactly a year after that *Blackwood's* wrote in a facetious tone:

Round the ring we sat, the stiff stuff tipsily quaffing.
 (Thanks be to thee, Jack Keats; our thanks for the dactyl and spondee;
 Pestleman Jack, whom, according to Shelley, the *Quarterly* murdered
 With a critique as fell as one of his own patent medicines.)⁷⁹

This facetiousness included Shelley as well, since almost exactly a year after that, *Blackwood's* argued:

What a rash man Shelley was, to put to sea in a frail boat with Jack's poetry on board! Why, man, it would sink a trireme. In the preface to Mr Shelley's poems we are told that 'his vessel bore out of sight with a favourable wind;' but what is that to the purpose? It had *Endymion* on board, and there was an end.⁸⁰

At the end of 1825, when J. G. Lockhart moved to London to take over the editorship of the *Quarterly Review*, John Wilson became the new editor of *Blackwood's*. But

⁷⁸ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, xi (July 1822), 59-60.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* xiv (July 1823), 67.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* xvi (September 1824), 288.

Wilson, known as Christopher North and the Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, was not of a different mind. Neither was his tone of criticism milder than that of Lockhart. He continued to keep the prejudicial attacks against Keats and the 'Cockney School of Poetry' alive. And in the long preface to his first number as editor he freshened his indignation at that school and gave interesting reasons why its writers were worth damning. The foundations of the conservative party might have been shaken by the works of writers and thinkers of Jacobin and immoral tendency and the danger at the time was that England might become irreligious and secular in consequence. Recollection of those years of national peril renews all the old venom:

That we *did* smash that pestilent sect [the 'Cockney School'], we acknowledge with pleasure. A baser crew never was spewed over literature. Conceited, ignorant, insolent, disaffected, irreligious, and obscene, they had, by force of impudence, obtained a certain sway over the public mind. . . . That we did our work *roughly*, we acknowledge; they were not vermin to be crushed by delicate finger. . . . [Keats] was a cockney, and the Cockneys claimed him for their own. Never was there a young man so encrusted with conceit. He added new treasures to his mother-tongue, -- and what is worse, he outhunted Hunt in a species of emasculated pruriency, that, although invented in Little Britain, looks as if it were the product of some imaginative Eunuch's muse within the melancholy inspiration of the Haram. Besides, we know that the godless gang were flattering him into bad citizenship, and wheedling him out of his Christian faith.⁸¹

This is the first time the journal both confesses and claims proudly that it destroyed a new school of poetry and defamed its contributors out of concern for the morality of the nation. It is interesting to note that every attempt to defend Keats provoked a reply from *Blackwood's*. Two years later, and after the publication of Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, the importance of which will be discussed in the following pages, the review was still not ready to change its tone, though its view of the poet is a milder one and has no thought of recantation, maintaining:

⁸¹ *Ibid.* (January 1826), xv-xvi, xxvi.

Mr Keats died in the ordinary course of nature. Nothing was ever said in this Magazine about him, that needed to have given him, an hour's sickness; and had he lived a few years longer, he would have profited by our advice, and been grateful for it, although perhaps conveyed to him in a pill rather too bitter. Hazlitt, Hunt, and other unprincipled infidels, were his ruin. Had he lived a few years longer, we should have driven him in disgust from the gang that were gradually affixing a taint to his name. His genius we saw, and praised; but it was deplorably sunk in the mire of Cockneyism.⁸²

To have admired Keats's genius and the possibility of his renown in the near future, had he lived longer, was a significant confession but it was tainted with continued hostility towards his friends and circle. Clearly, they wanted to shift the responsibility of damaging Keats's literary fame onto his friends. Returning to the subject a year later, John Wilson maintained,

But we killed Keats[?!]. There again you -- lie. Hunt, Hazlitt, and the godless gang, slavered him to death. Bitterly did he confess that, in his last days, in language stronger than we wish to use; and the wretches would now accuse us of the murder of that poor youth, by a few harmless stripes of that rod, which 'whoever spareth injureth the child;' while they strut convicted, even in their Cockney consciences, of having done him to death, by administering to their unsuspecting victim, dose after dose, of that poison to which there is no antidote—their praise.⁸³

Unlike *Blackwood's*, the *Quarterly Review* always targeted Keats's sensuous and sensual poetry. After Keats's death, the *Quarterly* adopted a more restrained tone in speaking of it. J. G. Lockhart took over the editorship of the magazine in 1826 and his reaction towards Keats's death is noteworthy. But before going any further with this reviewer, it is important to focus on the first memoir of Keats to be published, a chapter of Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* entitled 'MR. KEATS. : WITH A CRITICISM ON HIS WRITINGS.' which appeared in 1828. Hunt acknowledged Keats's genius, believed that he was annoyed by the unjust reception of his poems and

⁸² *Ibid.* xxiii (March 1828), 403-4.

⁸³ *Ibid.* xxvi (September 1829), 525.

referred to the saga of the so-called Cockneys, regretting that he had not been able to help Keats to mitigate his agony.⁸⁴ He did not endorse Shelley and Byron's assertions about Keats's death.⁸⁵ He considered that Keats was manly in bearing physical illness but, throughout the chapter, supported the picture of Keats as a pale flower in his lonely and sad hours.⁸⁶ The book failed to attract the admiration of Keats's friends. Of course, this can be set down to their jealousy of Hunt, because he wrote the book by himself and had not consulted them, or because they thought that Hunt had given a sickly image of Keats. They thought Hunt had restricted his picture of Keats to his illness only.⁸⁷ On the other hand, the book roused the old animosity of the hostile reviewers and personal enemies of Hunt. *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly's* campaign against Hunt and Keats started up again. Lockhart, now the editor of the *Quarterly*, attacked Hunt for bringing together in one book the name of such trivial writers as Keats with such prominent ones as Byron. He mentioned scornful references to Keats in Byron's letters and poems so as to remind readers of his previous, unchanged view on the quality of Keats's poetry.

⁸⁴ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* i 425.

⁸⁵ 'A good rhyme about *particle* and *article* [in *Don Juan*] was not to be given up. I told him he was mistaken in attributing Mr. Keats's death to the critics, though they had perhaps hastened, and certainly embittered it; and he promised to alter the passage' *Ibid.* 439.

⁸⁶ 'At the recital of a noble action, or a beautiful thought they [Keats's sensitive eyes] would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled.' He had a 'delicate organization'. *Ibid.* 408 and 426 respectively. See also Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* (London: R. Cobden-sanderson, Ltd., 1930), 153 where Hunt has been quoted as saying: '[Keats] suddenly turned upon me, his eyes swimming with tears, and told me he was dying of a broken heart.'

⁸⁷ Brown thought that the work was 'worse than disappointing' and in a letter to Fanny Brawne mentioned: 'it seems as if Hunt was so impressed by his illness, that he had utterly forgotten him in health.' Maurice Buxton Forman, *Letters of John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), lxi. Hereafter *MBF*. Fanny Brawne accused Hunt and Hazlitt of imparting a 'weakness of character' to Keats. *Ibid.* lxiv. The reference to Hazlitt is apparently to his essay on 'On Living to One's-Self'. See page 23, footnote 65 for details.

Mocking at the idea that Keats died at the hands of the base critical reviewers of his poems, he wrote:

Our readers have probably forgotten all about *Endymion, a poem*, and the other works of this young man, the all but *universal roar of laughter* with which they were received some ten or twelve years ago, and the ridiculous story (which Mr Hunt denies) of the author's death being caused by the reviewers.⁸⁸

A glance at Hunt's *Lord Byron* reveals that by this time the old strength of party-feeling was waning in the conservative journals of the day.⁸⁹ This was a fact because by that time England was undergoing substantial social change and old political concerns were being replaced with new ones; readers no longer remembered the details of literary-political controversies of ten years previously. And, as Joseph Severn remarks, the literary taste of the nation was changing too.⁹⁰ This meant that, despite the conservative reviewers' earlier animosity towards Keats's poetry, it was no longer generally accepted that Byron's poetry surpassed that of Shelley or Keats. It was no longer universally believed that Byron's poetry conformed to the soundest judgement and literary principles or that Shelley's poetry was simply atheistic and that of Keats merely sensual and Cockney.⁹¹ Obviously, the older religious-political controversies no longer had the same resonance and the atheist Shelley was becoming known as Shelley the idealist. For these reasons, a year after the publication of *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* and the appearance of reviews and private opinions for or against it, Brown thought time had eventually come for him to write either a detailed memoir or a

⁸⁸ *Quarterly Review*, xxxvii (March 1828), 416.

⁸⁹ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* i 256.

⁹⁰ 'On the Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame' 405-406.

⁹¹ MacGillivray recalls that 'soon parliamentary reform, the social legislation of the thirties, and the beginning of the Tractarian controversy introduced a new era with interests and programmes that would have seemed utterly deplorable to Gifford or any defender of the established order in 1818.' *MacGillivray* xlv.

full biography of Keats. He asked Fanny Brawne if he could make use of Keats's letters and poems in which there was reference to her. She consented reluctantly, believing that:

. . . the kindest act would be to let him rest forever in the obscurity to which unhappy circumstances have condemned him. Will the writings that remain of his rescue him from it? You can tell better than I. . . .⁹²

But the pain of recollecting the sorrowful life of the poet, which had left a vivid and persistent impression on Brown's mind, stopped him from connecting Keats's letters together so that he could use them for a memoir. Moreover, Brown believed that George Keats had mistreated his brother and because of his animosity towards George he was deprived of the essential materials in George's possession which were necessary to make a detailed memoir possible. In 1830 when he began the task of writing the memoir, he got into a quarrel with Dilke because the latter defended George and blamed Brown for trying to make profit out of Keats's life.⁹³ The quarrel with Dilke paralysed Brown's enthusiasm for the memoir. He continued putting off the task of writing till November 26, 1836 when he announced that in order to force himself into finishing the task of composition he had registered with the Plymouth Institution to give a lecture on 'The Life and Poems of John Keats'.⁹⁴ This lecture, the first biography properly speaking, was not published until 1937 (by Oxford University Press). Even as late as 1836, Keats's reputation and fame had not yet been established in any substantial measure and there was as yet no enthusiastic audience for his poetry. Brown gives an interesting account of what happened in the lecture hall of the Plymouth Athenaeum

⁹² Letter of 29 December 1829 in *MBF* lxiii. The letter was published for the first time in a London newspaper in June 1933. See S. B. Ward, 'Keats and Fanny Brawne', *Revue Anglo-Americaine*, 10 (1932-1933), 139.

⁹³ Brown, *Life of Keats* 14-15.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 17.

where he gave the talk on the life of Keats on December 27, 1836. This lecture was based on his memoir of Keats, in its first form.⁹⁵ From a letter he wrote in June 1837 to Leigh Hunt, we learn that after the lecture he had met with two Tory parsons who had opposed him and his positive opinion about Keats.⁹⁶ The reason why Brown was objected to was that he was believed to be a biased defender of Keats and not a detached critic of the poet. Once again, in the lecture, Brown's speech had reminded the Tory auditors of Keats's *Endymion* and the literary discussion in the session that followed, became a political one. From the same letter, we realise that Brown had discarded the idea of publishing his speech, realising that it would not receive unprejudiced attention from conservative reviewers, because the very publication of his defence would remind them of Keats's Cockney associations and this would stir them into renewing their campaign against him.⁹⁷ Only a few people had shown interest in what Brown had written about Keats.⁹⁸ The demand for Keats's life history remained as limited as the interest in Keats's poems had been during his lifetime and this situation continued for some five years following the lecture.⁹⁹ Moreover, rather than an impartial biography,

⁹⁵ *The Critical Heritage* 17-18; *Life of Severn* 179.

⁹⁶ Brown, *Life of Keats* 18.

⁹⁷ '... my intention of publishing it [Brown, *Life of Keats*] is not so eager as it was By the experience I had at our Institution, and by what I read in the works of the day, I fear that his fame is not yet high enough. 3rd I had rather a cool reply on the subject from Saunders and Otley. And 4th I would almost rather it were published after my death than it should disturb my tranquillity, from attacks, whether against him from his revilers, or against me -- for I know not what.' *Ibid.* 19.

⁹⁸ Contrary to its title, the memoir did not contain any works by Keats and few were interested in the memoir by itself. This was because George Keats had threatened Brown with an injunction if he dared to publish any of Keats's writings without George's permission. At last he gave his consent to the publication of a 'Memoir, and Literary Remains.' *Life of Severn* 191.

⁹⁹ Brown gave the unpublished *Life* and the manuscripts of the poems of Keats to Richard Monckton Milnes on 19 March 1841, because he thought only Milnes, because of his knowledge of and impartiality towards Keats, was 'better able to sit in judgement on a selection for publication than any other man' and therefore only Milnes could do

Brown's *Life* was replete with invective aimed at the critics because he, like so many others, had adopted the view that the reviewers were responsible for the untimely death of the poet.¹⁰⁰

Tennyson's first volume of poetry appeared in 1832 and was harshly reviewed by John Wilson Croker in 1833 in the *Quarterly Review* for adopting Keats as a model. He ridiculed Tennyson as a follower of Keats and his poetry, and ironically praised him as 'a new prodigy of genius—another and a brighter star of that galaxy or *milky way* of poetry¹⁰¹ of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger.'¹⁰² Croker had correctly sensed that Keats had had a great influence on the poetry of Tennyson. Therefore, he had to choose either to acknowledge Keats because of his influence or to treat Tennyson as another Keats and attack him. He chose the second option and, in a letter dated January 7, 1833 to John Murray, the *Quarterly's* publisher, wrote: 'I undertake

justice to the poet's fame. *Ibid.* 194. The manuscript of Brown's *Life* came into the possession of Monckton Milnes's (later Lord Houghton) son, Lord Crewe who allowed it to be published in 1937 for the first time.

¹⁰⁰ "'... the bitterest attacks were published in two of the most influential periodicals, and the scoffing remarks of *Blackwood* and *The Quarterly* greatly curtailed the sales of Keats's books, just at the time when his inherited income disappeared. . . . the mental anguish of this period reacted most unfavourably on his physical condition and retarded even the temporary recovery from his first tubercular attack. . . . it was tuberculosis, of course, which killed Keats. In any case he would have died from it . . . but his mental condition, irritated almost beyond endurance, must have hastened the process of his illness. The critical attacks were the starting point for his melancholia;" Brown's opinion was shared by Fanny Keats, George Keats, Bailey, Reynolds, Haydon, Dilke, Hunt, Taylor, and Woodhouse—in short, by all of Keats's intimate friends who expressed an opinion on the subject except Clarke and Severn.' Brown, *Life of Keats* 26-27. Consult pages 26-34 in the same source for an account of Fanny Brawne and her acquaintance, Gerald Griffin, George Keats, Bailey, Haydon, Dilke, Byron, Hunt, Taylor, Clarke, Woodhouse and Joseph Severn's opinion about the disastrous effects of unfair criticism on Keats.

¹⁰¹ This must be an ironic allusion to the closing stanzas of *Adonais*.

¹⁰² *Quarterly Review*, 4 (1833), 418-19.

Tennyson and hope to make another Keats of him.'¹⁰³ In practice, this means that Croker not only did not want to compensate for the damage he had done to Keats's reputation but that the tone and the content of the review simply reaffirmed his old critical harshness when he ferociously attacked Keats's *Endymion* in September 1818. If, however, Shelley in *Adonais* had given a weak and limp picture of Keats as victim, the young Tennyson increased the public's interest in actually reading Keats by holding him up as a model for contemporary poetry.¹⁰⁴ As late as 1835, Keats's second publisher, John Taylor, hesitating whether an edition of Keats's poetry would find readers, had said 'I fear that even 250 copies would not sell.'¹⁰⁵ It was therefore not until 1840 when William Smith brought out a long-delayed first collected edition of Keats's poetry.¹⁰⁶ The 1840 edition was reprinted in two volumes in 1841. They had aroused so little interest that both Rossetti and Holman Hunt, youths who discovered his poetry in that decade, thought that they had come upon an entirely unknown poet.¹⁰⁷ In 1839, Lockhart had censured Milnes for paying critical attention and according respect to Keats and Tennyson. But such censure was no longer effective, because in 1842, Tennyson's second volume appeared and was favourably reviewed and eagerly read by serious readers. The fame of Tennyson was established and secured with this second

¹⁰³ M. F. Brightfield, *John Wilson Croker* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1940), 350.

¹⁰⁴ George H. Ford, *Keats and the Victorians* (New Haven: Yale University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 17-21. Hereafter *Keats and the Victorians*.

¹⁰⁵ *Keats's publisher* 199.

¹⁰⁶ Keats's poems were not reprinted in any shape until 1829, when the Paris house of Galignani issued, in a single tall volume with double columns, a collective edition of the poems of Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats together. The 1840 volume was exactly reprinted from Galignani's edition of Keats's poems. *Sidney Colvin* 528.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in James Pope-Hennessy, *Monckton Milnes, The Years of Promise 1809-1851*, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1949 and 1951), i 292. Hereafter *Milnes, Years of Promise*.

volume. Any tribute to Tennyson would also indirectly throw respect on Keats and, therefore, in the wake of Tennyson's fame came an enthusiastic reconsideration of Keats's poetry. In 1846 appeared a new edition by Edward Moxon. The edition reappeared a year later and was reprinted seven times. Keats was never famous during his lifetime, and only became so slowly thereafter. It was growing and spreading, but Keats had certainly not achieved anything like fame up to the publication of the first major biography: Richard Monckton Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* which appeared in two volumes in 1848. In the 1848 Academy Holman Hunt exhibited a picture—*The Eve of St Agnes*—with a subject taken from Keats, and when Milnes's book appeared that summer both he and Rossetti seized it eagerly, reading it all through an August day upon the Thames as they floated down water to Greenwich and the Isle of Dogs. Few young men of their generation had even heard of John Keats; to a limited public the appearance of Milnes's volumes was almost as revolutionary as Robert Bridges' publication of Gerard Manley Hopkins in the 20th century. Joseph Severn had lent Milnes a portrait of Keats to include in the biography. In 1848 in England the eager face of Keats, gazing with impassioned eyes from the engraved frontispiece of Milnes's first volume, was still unfamiliar. Before going any further with Milnes's biography, a bit of Milnes's personal, literary, and political interests must be given.

CHAPTER 2

KEATS THE MAN AND KEATS THE POET IN MILNES'S *LIFE, LETTERS, AND LITERARY REMAINS OF JOHN KEATS* (1848)

I

MILNES'S POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND LITERARY CAREER

Milnes was a liberal-minded Englishman.¹⁰⁸ He had a very quick and natural response to beauty. But his attitude to pictures was a thoroughly literary attitude. He was not in any commonly accepted sense, Victorian. In contrast with the stiff, reserved views and the pasty sentimentality of many of his most intelligent contemporaries, Milnes's own volatile opinions seem free and even anarchic. He wrote, for example, a letter to Robert Browning to congratulate him on his elopement with Elizabeth Barrett from her father's house in Wimpole Street in September 1846.

The *Edinburgh Review* had always been 'specifically and notoriously Whig. Milnes' decision to write for it was thus another step towards the Whig fold, to which by temperament and outlook he belonged.'¹⁰⁹ Francis Jeffrey had been the first editor and from the beginning the assumption was that the articles in the *Edinburgh* had to be not only 'intelligent, knowledgeable and easy to read, but sharp and [even] malicious as well.' (209) Milnes's first article, which appeared in the number for April 1844,

¹⁰⁸ I have mostly benefited from, T. Wemyss Reid's *Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, 2 vols (London, Paris & Melbourne: Cassell & Company, 1890) and James Pope-Hennessy's book, especially chapters 10-13, for the information which appears in this section.

¹⁰⁹ *Milnes, Years of Promise* ii 209. Further references to this book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

‘fulfilled most of the editor’s requirements.’ (209) Milnes went on to publish a series of ‘four authoritative and enlightened articles on Germany’ in the review. These were: ‘The Political State of Prussia’ (January 1846); ‘Reflections on the Political State of Germany’ (April 1849); ‘Germany and Erfurt’ (April 1850); and ‘The Menace of War in Germany’ (January 1851).

The *Quarterly Review* for December 1844 published a review of Milnes’s second collection of poems, *Palm Leaves* (1844), which seemed to his ‘friends to constitute a personal attack on him. The article was called *The Rights of Women*’, and its point was to ‘defend the English ideal of womanhood against Milnes’ alleged praise of the harem system in *Palm Leaves*, chiefly by proving that Milnes did not know what he was writing about. The article was skilful’ and the tone ‘bantering’, and made great sport of Milnes while calling him ‘an able polemical writer’ and ‘a grave and thoughtful poet.’ (228) He was said in particular to be ‘accustomed to the double and simultaneous duties of defending and opposing the Government.’ (229) People continued to discuss the piece even in 1845, the author being widely recognised as Alexander William Kinglake, Milnes’s old friend and fellow-Apostle at Cambridge. Milnes is unlikely to have been amused.¹¹⁰ The incident will have made him aware of the vulnerability of poetry on sexual themes and of the poet on grounds of his political views.

Milnes was generous in giving money to others and in finding jobs for the refugees who in 1845-1850 had left Germany for England. By the year 1845, Alfred

¹¹⁰ He had known Kinglake for nearly twenty years. Indeed it was Richard Monckton Milnes and Thomas Sunderland who ‘had ensured his election to the Apostles in Cambridge.’ Kinglake felt distressed and repentant afterwards. The review was soon forgotten and Milnes accepted Kinglake’s explanations and they remained friends. *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 229 and Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles: the Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 51-52. Hereafter *The Cambridge Apostles*.

Tennyson had fallen into serious financial trouble. Carlyle asked Milnes to secure Tennyson a yearly pension of £200 by his influence on the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. 'Peel gave the pension to Tennyson, who was grateful but reluctant' to take the money as he was uncomfortable with the status of pensioner (230). Carlyle's appeal to Milnes over the Tennyson pension illustrates that Milnes had acquired a degree of political influence. 'He was not a first-class poet'; neither was he 'an eminent politician' (230). But he had a unique position as link between the world of power and politics and the world of artistic talent and literature.

Milnes was ever ready to help people who needed help. He sought to provide Coventry Patmore with a job at the British Museum. He wrote to Panizzi there and 'in November 1846 Patmore received an appointment in the Library.' As Patmore's benefactor, Milnes afterwards lent him money, employed him in the preparation of the *LLR* and 'stood godfather to his elder son, who was christened Milnes Patmore' (231).¹¹¹ In assisting poor writers 'Milnes was as much guided by his own kind instincts as by the wish to enrich English Literature. . . . during 1844 and 1845 he gave a great deal of aid to Thomas Hood, contributing . . . articles to *Hood's Magazine* [without payment] and getting his friends to do so too.' (233)

In February 1845, Sir Robert Peel had proposed 'to increase the state grant to the Royal Catholic College of Maynooth and to contribute a further lump sum of £30,000 towards rebuilding . . . the penurious barracks in which the Irish Roman Catholic clergy were educated' there (235). 'The Irish religious debates in the House of Commons had begun in February 1844.' (235) Peel's proposal threw the whole country of England into uproar; 'hostile petitions poured into the new Houses of Parliament from every

¹¹¹ Patmore's second volume of poems, *Tamerton Church Tower* (1853), was dedicated to Milnes.

quarter in England. . . . in . . . Milnes' own constituency of Pontefract the majority of the electors were either Dissenters—as his own immediate forebears had been—or at any rate' rigidly opposed to any form of liberalisation of the treatment of Catholics (235). He was asked to vote against the Bill by his constituents, but decided instead that he would vote for it. This action diminished his popularity to a great extent 'at Pontefract and nearly cost him his seat in the election of 1847 when he scraped in by a mere nineteen votes.' (235)

'To the Yorkshire dissenters . . . [Milnes's] name was already tarnished by his connection with the Tractarians as well perhaps as by his long residence in Italy. . . . [But] popular ignorance and prejudice were always as distasteful to him as were ordinary English conventions or royalty-worship.' Throughout '. . . his life he stood out against them whenever he got the chance, and without calculating the consequences. This was not the road to success in politics.' (236) Milnes had already incurred the anger of his constituents upon the Irish Question. When in 1845 he published 'a little book *The Real Union of England and Ireland* which annoyed most of his fellow Tories . . . On the book's title-page he had printed a characteristic quotation from . . . Landor: "Folly hath often the same results as Wisdom, but Wisdom would not engage in her schoolroom so expensive an assistant as Calamity.' (236) He professed himself very pleased with this book 'in which he called on the Tories to do justice to Ireland by endowing the Catholic Church. He told his sister that he thought it the best thing he had ever written in prose, and his father that he had been very glad to put in print opinions which he could not voice in any other form.' (236)

The Real Union was heavily 'rhetorical in style . . . forming a contrast to the well-knit *Edinburgh* articles he had begun to write.' (237) It was an 'attack on accepted

English' understanding of the Irish problem (237). Milnes claims that the nature of the English-Irish relation has altered the conduct of the most conservative of institutions:

Where else has the Roman Catholic Church, the champion of civil order and submission to authority throughout Europe, been perverted into an engine of tumult and protector of rebellion? (237)

The public was not very receptive to the subtle propositions advanced in Milnes's book. 'English people did not like being told by a compatriot that they had "persecuted" the Irish; they were not grateful to Milnes for pointing out the "devoted character" of the Irish priesthood, nor were they ready to agree with him that "the hope of still Anglicanising the Roman Catholics of Ireland can hardly rest in one instructed mind".'

(237) *The Real Union of England and Ireland* did 'quite considerable harm to what was left of Monckton Milnes' political prospects.' (237) Milnes's 'earnest, emotional interest in Ireland, first awakened by his friendship with Stafford O'Brien [at Cambridge] . . . in 1829, had been confirmed by his two idyllic visits to that island in his youth.' (237) He was 'deeply concerned at the onset of the Irish potato famine in August 1846 . . . the peasantry of Ireland were soon dying in their thousands, and though generous relief was sent by private people from all over England, the rate of death from starvation and "famine-fever" mounted week by week. In November 1846 Milnes crossed over to Dublin . . . and made a short tour of the famine areas.' (237-38)

When he got back to Yorkshire, together with other members of his family, he 'sent cheques to the priest at Skibbereen¹¹² and to the distributing agents at Bantry and Mallow. . . . the sight of suffering' and poverty in Ireland 'always affected Milnes acutely' (239).

¹¹² Skibbereen is known as the capital of West Cork. Bantry, in the heart of West Cork, is a region of lush vegetation, palm trees and semi-tropical flowers. Mallow was the administrative capital of North Cork. All towns are in the south of Ireland.

When, in 1846, Milnes returned to Westminster from a stay in Normandy ‘the question of Corn Law Repeal¹¹³ was reaching its final crisis.’ (243) Peel persuaded ‘Ministers pledged to Protection that the only course was a total repeal of the laws controlling the price of imported foreign grain.’ (243) Therefore the Corn Laws¹¹⁴ were doomed. The Corn Bill was presented; it passed its final stages on 15 May 1846. Milnes’s part in the debates of the parliament over the Repeal was ‘undistinguished and unimportant’, because his ‘opinions on the Corn Laws had changed and wobbled for months.’ (243) He was a moderate protectionist having first been a supporter of the towns against the country interest. In the end, ‘after further hesitations, he voted for Repeal. But when Peel’s administration fell at the end of May 1845, Milnes chose a quick way out of the dilemma in which he, like most moderate Tories, then found himself. Lacking the sense of personal devotion to Sir Robert Peel which inspired some members of the Tory party to remain Peelites, unwilling to become a follower of’ Peel’s opponents, Milnes gave his ‘independent support to the new government’ of Lord John Russel as Prime Minister at the head of the Whig administration (244-45). ‘He wrote a letter to his constituents explaining how he had come to take this decision. The letter received much favourable newspaper publicity. Some months later, he confirmed his

¹¹³ This was rooted in the Anti-Corn-Law League, an organization formed in 1839 to work for the repeal of the English corn laws. It was an affiliation of groups in various cities and districts with headquarters at Manchester and was an outgrowth of the smaller Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association. Richard Cobden and John Bright were its leading figures. The league won over Sir Robert Peel to its views, and the corn laws were repealed in 1846.

¹¹⁴ The Corn Laws were regulations restricting the export and import of grain, particularly in England. As early as 1361 export was forbidden in order to keep English grain cheap. Subsequent laws, numerous and complex, forbade export unless the domestic price was low and forbade import unless it was high. The purpose of the laws was to assure a stable and sufficient supply of grain from domestic sources, eliminating undue dependence on foreign supplies, yet allowing for imports in time of scarcity. The corn law of 1815 was designed to maintain high prices and prevent an agricultural depression after the Napoleonic Wars. Consumers and labourers objected, but it was the criticism of manufacturers that the laws hampered industrialization by subsidizing agriculture that proved most effective.

new political allegiance by relinquishing his membership of the Carlton Club.¹¹⁵ Milnes had not in any way affected the repeal of the Corn Law, but the repeal had drastically affected Milnes. It had made him turn Whig.' (245)

Disraeli wrote a spiteful account in the 'sixties describing Milnes's behaviour during the Corn Law days. 'According to his analysis, envy was a chief component in Milnes's character; and the new and powerful position of Disraeli in 1846 . . . had aroused this envy to the full.' (245) Disraeli remarks:

When he [Milnes] found Peel was flung in a ditch he changed his politics, and took to Palmerston, whom, as well as Lady Palmerston, he toadied with a flagrant perseverance that made everyone smile.¹¹⁶

'Other factors as well as thwarted ambition led Milnes to leave the Tory party in 1846.' (245) He had never been in any way indebted to Sir Robert Peel. By character and temperament, as well as by a family tradition which his father had broken, Milnes was inclined to Liberalism. Most of his friends were Liberals - and he saw a good deal of the most earnest, thoughtful radicals, like Mr. and Mrs. Grote and Sir William Molesworth. 'Milnes did not like or understand English country life, and to him the point of view of the squires was anachronistic and remote. He reacted . . . against his father's active faith in Protection.¹¹⁷ But more powerful than any factor in Milnes's ultimate decision to leave the Tory party was his touchy and almost morbid dislike of Peel.' (245-46) To Milnes, 'Peel seemed increasingly chilly and neglectful' and he had

¹¹⁵ British political and social club (founded 1832). Located in London, it was long the centre of the Conservative party organization. Since World War II the club has been primarily social.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 245.

¹¹⁷ The Corn Law row had stimulated Mr Milnes into political activity in the spring of 1846, when he delivered 'a brilliant Philippic' against Repeal when supporting the Protectionist candidate for the West Riding, whom his son opposed.

lost his attraction of the time when in late 1830s the Tories were still in opposition (246). Peel had little chance or 'took no trouble to placate those whom he disappointed; and he . . . found such a variable character as that of . . . Milnes . . . almost incomprehensible.' (246) 'He would have remembered . . . that Milnes' first appearance in London had been as a poet; and Peel had a notorious distaste for political men who put their names to so much as a published pamphlet, let alone to several neat volumes of . . . verse.' (246) Moreover, Milnes's 'apparent confusion of aim, his ill-success at speaking in the House, his love of gossip and his seeming indiscretion were quite sufficient to make Peel judge him not suitable for office—just as they served to obscure his real intelligence and his wide acquaintance with foreign . . . [political] affairs.' (246)

Milnes expected a place in Peel's administration and to that end had written long, assiduous letters to Peel, to which he received polite and entirely non-committal replies. 'The courteous but lofty way in which he treated Milnes' annoyed him (247). By 1846 Peel's snubbing process had begun to exasperate Milnes. 'Nothing he did made the slightest impression' on Peel's neglect, and the final insult came in the form of being passed over for the Under-Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs in 1846 (247-49).

'New Year's Day 1848 found Milnes staying at Woburn Abbey. His admission on familiar terms to this great stronghold of the Whigs . . . as well as to other big "ministerial houses" . . . was one result of his switch in politics.' (272) He became anti-monarchist in his views and accused the contemporary aristocracy of stupidity and helplessness. 'Linked with Milnes' progressive distrust of aristocratic government there was a growing passion for democracy. He romanticised . . . [democratic government].'

(274) He developed the position that

all *great* work will be & in fact is done by the community itself. . . . Not but that the men of letters & thought will be more than ever the indirect rulers of the world: through the masses, they will really move the political system & have the uses of power.¹¹⁸

He grew to despise the idea that a royal was in the nature of things better than a popular person. He launched strong arguments against monarchies because he believed that in a monarchical society a King manages to get another person to help him do violent things.

There were revolution events in February 1848 in France which led to the establishment of the second Republic, and the reaction of the English court to the events of 1848 thoroughly amused Milnes as well as Carlyle. Carlyle had told Milnes: 'there's the poor little Queen looking out into the world like a small canary prying into a thunderstorm.' The fall of Louis-Philippe and the subsequent 'rise to brief power of Lamartine in 1848 and of Alexis de Tocqueville in 1849 gave Milnes a little palpitation of fresh hope.' (278) For Milnes, this was perhaps the dawn of a new age in which poets and idealists and thinkers were to rule in Europe. 'Milnes was much excited by Louis-Philippe's dramatic flight from Paris to Dieppe in the last week of February 1848. . . . there had never been a French Republic in his lifetime. He welcomed the downfall of the Orleanist monarchy with nearly as great an enthusiasm as that with which he had acclaimed its establishment in July 1830' (278-79) 'The King and Queen of the French, frightened, weary and incognito, had stepped ashore at Newhaven on 3 March. They had travelled under the name of Smith, and Louis-Philippe afterwards told Milnes that the queen had been so nervous he had been obliged to keep crying out: "Mrs. Smith, on ne prie pas tant en voyage!"'¹¹⁹ They had readily accepted Queen Victoria's

¹¹⁸ Quoted in *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 274-75. The next quotation is from the same source.

¹¹⁹ Noted in *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 279.

offer of hospitality, settling themselves, their children and the remnants of their court at Claremont’ (279) Milnes’s ‘mother had been born at Claremont . . . this fact may have added edge to the curiosity with which he hurried down to see the royal exiles. . . . [he] made his first visit to Claremont on 22 March. The king received him graciously, assuring him that he was glad to see him there or in a cottage.’ (279) ‘The king then recapitulated for . . . [Milnes’s] benefit some of the events of 22 February, [and] spoke disparagingly of Thiers.’ (280)¹²⁰

Milnes had lost the opportunity of going to look at Paris in the revolutionary turmoil of 1830.¹²¹ The Revolution of 1848 seemed much more progressive and exciting. ‘The Days of July had merely produced a middle-class monarchy; February 1848 saw the birth of a free republic, inspired and apparently ruled by a Romantic poet and orator,’ Lamartine (281). For his support of the Revolution in France, Milnes was called La Martine. Milnes had known Lamartine for eight or nine years. He now entered ‘the very sanctum in which . . . [Lamartine] sat wearily signing decrees, he attended . . . [the poet’s] diplomatic soirées, called on them in the evenings if he wished

¹²⁰ See the next note for a brief information on Thiers.

¹²¹ There was a revolt in France in July, 1830, against the government of King Charles X. The attempt of the ultraroyalists under Charles to return to the *ancien régime* provoked the opposition of the middle classes, who wanted more voice in the government. The banker Jacques Laffitte was typical of the bourgeois who supported liberal journalists, such as Adolphe Thiers, in opposing the government. Liberal opposition reached its peak when Charles called on the reactionary and unpopular Jules Armand de Polignac to form a new ministry (Aug., 1829). When the chamber of deputies registered its disapproval, Charles dissolved the chamber. New elections (July, 1830) returned an even stronger opposition majority. Charles and Polignac responded with the July Ordinances, which established rigid press control, dissolved the new chamber, and reduced the electorate. Insurrection developed, and street barricades and fighting cleared Paris of royal troops. Charles X was forced to flee and abdicated in favor of his grandson, Henri, comte de Chambord. Henri was set aside, and, although there was a movement for a republic, the duc d’Orléans was proclaimed (July 31) king of the French as Louis Philippe. His reign was known as the July Monarchy.

to do so, and listened to Madame de Lamartine's accounts of her husband's superhuman energy in this time of crisis. Milnes reached Paris on 19 April. He remained there one month.' (282) Most of his time in Paris was 'spent collecting anecdotes and listening to stories, scampering from one point of vantage to the next. . . . he investigated the new revolutionary debating-clubs, such as Barbes' and Blanqui's' (282) He talked with everyone of any interest in Paris and found that even the Paris women had become political. He was specially glad to have been present in the Assemblée during the Revolution and Counter-Revolution of 15 May, 'when an attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government almost succeeded and even Lamartine's silver eloquence was met by furious cries of "Plus de lyre!".' (283) 'To French people the revolution was either miraculous or horrifying; to none of them was it a trivial spectacle for foreigners to enjoy.' (283) And so before Milnes left Paris on 17 May, 'his own activities had become the subject of some sharp and bitter comments.' (283) He was accused of looking with smile on his face on the perilous scene of violence and counter-revolution of 15 May 'as though it were a cock-fight or a play' (283). He was overheard to say that the spectacle amused him very much.

By the end of 1848 there had been some other European revolts over which only a few influential Englishmen, among them Milnes, had enthused. 'Exasperated by the timidity with which his compatriots had watched the surge and ebb of Continental Liberalism, Milnes settled down to write his last political pamphlet, a seventy-page production cast in the form of a letter: *The Events of 1848 especially in their relation to Great Britain—A Letter to the Marquis of Lansdowne by Richard Monckton Milnes, M.P.*' (287) This pamphlet, written in a 'grandiose and authoritative manner, surveyed the state of Europe during 1848, [and] heavily criticised English apathy, pleaded for England's support for liberal movements everywhere.' (287) *The Events* met with a

varying reception. The Whig Lord Lansdowne himself ‘expressed an amiable surprise to find his name’ on Milnes’s outburst (288).¹²² Lord Brougham wrote that he agreed with the contents of the whole pamphlet. ‘Lord Jeffrey sent from Edinburgh a letter of exuberant and overwhelming praise.’ Carlyle thought that it was Milnes’s greatest work. Guizot disagreed with it. ‘On the whole, admiration for Milnes’ humane and liberal attitude was general’ The Whig newspapers gave considerable space to reviewing the pamphlet. ‘Whether it met with approval or abuse, *The Events of 1848* made a great deal more stir in London than anything Milnes had written before. On 22 February 1849, the *Morning Chronicle* printed a leading article upon the pamphlet’ which ridiculed Milnes’s ‘universal ignorance and omniscient pretensions.’¹²³ The author of the first biography of Keats, like the subject of it, was the object of conservative abuse for the literal tendency of his writings in a period of revolutionary ferment. This was the case in the very year that *LLLR* was published, and will have influenced the way in which Milnes’s account of Keats was received. I shall consider this matter more fully later.

II

KEATS ENTERS HISTORY: MILNES’S *LLLR*

The genesis of Milnes’s biography lay far back in his Cambridge period. He became an apostle in 1829 and his acquaintance with Keats goes back to the time when Arthur Hallam and his group of undergraduate friends at Cambridge brought out a

¹²² The next three quotations are from the same page.

¹²³ Noted in *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 289.

reprint of *Adonais* (the first of its sort in England) in the summer of that year.¹²⁴ Hallam, Milnes and the Tennyson brothers would read and eagerly discuss the poetry of John Keats. Later, in Rome, Milnes's admiration for Keats had been strengthened and confirmed by his friendship with Severn, whom he had commissioned to copy the head of Keats for Harriette, his sister. In November 1830, three of the Shelley and Keats enthusiasts group, Hallam himself, Richard Monckton Milnes, and Thomas Sunderland took part in a 'memorable debate - the Cambridge-Oxford debate [at the Oxford Union] on the relative merits of Shelley and Byron'¹²⁵ and expressed the view that Shelley was a greater poet than Byron.¹²⁶ Their enthusiasm for Shelley's *Adonais* entailed their admiration for its subject. The young Alfred Tennyson was a close associate of the group and Keats's influence on him had done much to 'colour his style in poetry and make him strive to "load every rift of a subject with ore".'¹²⁷ Edward FitzGerald, a friend of Tennyson, had an equal esteem for Keats. In the summer of 1831 Milnes had been laid up with malaria at Walter Savage Landor's villa at Fiesole in Florence, and had there made friends with Charles Armitage Brown and 'agreed to take over the writing of Keats's life.'¹²⁸ To write the biography, Milnes had been assembling Keats

¹²⁴ Jennifer Wallace, ed, *Lives of the Great Romantics II: Volume 1, Keats* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1997), 125. Hereafter *Lives of the Great Romantics II: Volume 1*.

¹²⁵ *The Cambridge Apostles* 46 and 142. Sunderland was elected to the Cambridge Conversazione Society at the end of his first term in 1826. Milnes entered Cambridge University in 1827 when he was 18 and like Tennyson joined the Society in October 1829. Hallam entered Cambridge University in 1828 when he was 17 and became a member of the Society in May 1829. By the end of his first year he was a 'furious Shelleyist'; he was, as quoted by Allen, of the opinion that 'at the present day *Shelley* is the idol before which we are to be short by the knees'. *The Cambridge Apostles* 45, 222-223.

¹²⁶ *Sidney Colvin* 527.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 527. The quotation: "load every rift . . ." is part of Keats's letter of 16 August 1820 to P. B. Shelley. *Gittings* 390.

¹²⁸ *Lives of the Great Romantics II: Volume 1* 125.

material for many years and the publisher Moxon had even advertised the book early in 1845.¹²⁹ Milnes's original source for the 'chronology of the poet's life' was the unpublished memoir by Charles Brown 'which had been left in Milnes' care in 1841 when its author and his son Carlino had emigrated to New Zealand.'¹³⁰ 'The delay in the appearance of . . . [the *LLR*] was not solely due to Milnes' indolence but to certain external factors as well—the quarrel, for instance, between Brown and George Keats, the poet's brother who lived in the United States.' The quarrel had barred Brown from 'getting access to a major collection of . . . [Keats's] letters and poems; and it was only in 1845 that John Jeffrey, the American second husband of George Keats' widow, sent Milnes transcripts of the papers in his wife's possession.' Keats's friend, John Hamilton Reynolds, 'had been touchy and difficult at first, refusing to allow publication of any of Keats' letters to himself. Reynolds was finally won over by a letter from Milnes, and wrote: "all the papers I possess—all the information I can render—whatever I can do to aid your kind and judiciously intended work—are at your service.'" Milnes drew the information about Keats's school days from Charles Cowden Clarke, Edward Holmes (Keats's younger school friend), Henry Stephens, a surgeon, Felton Mathew, Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828) and *Imagination and Fancy* (1844), Taylor, Reynolds, Haslam, and Benjamin Haydon. All these gave him whatever they had in their possession including their memoranda of Keats and his letters.¹³¹ This was first and foremost because of Milnes's

¹²⁹ The material used by Milnes for the biography is now in the Houghton Library of Harvard University. This important collection of Keatsiana has been published in *The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers 1816-1878* (Harvard University Press, 1965) under the editorship of Professor Hyder E. Rollins, author of *Keats' Reputation in America to 1848*.

¹³⁰ *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 291. The next three quotations are from the same page.

¹³¹ *Sidney Colvin* 532-535 and *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 293. Jennifer Wallace, however, mentions the names of only four of Milnes's correspondents, that is, 'Charles

gentle behaviour, gracious manner of correspondence and the diplomatic use to which he put the 'chameleon-like quality that always distinguished him.'¹³² Brown gave the manuscript of *Life of John Keats* to Milnes on 19 March 1841 on the understanding that Milnes would address the two principal sources of what he considered the current distorted image of Keats and try to correct them. Milnes was asked to rebut the critical abuse of Keats in the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* and also to correct Hunt's version of Keats's pathetic illness and the feminized picture of him in his memoir, because Brown judged that although Keats was indeed ill and tormented in his final days in England, Hunt had magnified the importance of the illness.¹³³ *Blackwood's* had succeeded in disseminating the view that Keats - or 'Johnny Keats' as they called him - was an ignorant poetaster who propagated a morally suspect literary taste; Shelley and Byron had popularized the myth of the death of the poet by a vicious article in the *Quarterly Review* and laid the foundations of the portrayal of Keats as a delicate youth and a fading pale flower.

Severn, who painted Milnes in London in 1847, was as anxious for the book to be published as were Brown and Reynolds, but though he volunteered to help he did not wish Milnes to print any part of Brown's memoir of Keats. When all Keats's friends gave Milnes whatever reminiscences they had of the poet, 'the usual jealousies cropped up—Severn, for instance, declaring that Brown had never been as intimate with Keats

Brown, Joseph Severn, John Hamilton Reynolds and George Keats's widow.' *Lives of the Great Romantics II: Volume 1* xviii.

¹³² *The Cambridge Apostles* 44.

¹³³ Brown had written to Dilke on 17 December 1829 that Hunt had given them 'a whining, puling boy'. Cited in William Henry Marquess, *Lives of the Poet: The First Century of Keats's Biography* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 41. Hereafter *Lives of the Poet*.

as he pretended.’¹³⁴ Benjamin Haydon’s last letter to Milnes, written four weeks before he cut his throat, contained further recollections of Keats. In September 1847, Milnes embarked for Spain and the long delay made Reynolds restless. ‘Help of another sort (no doubt well-paid, for Milnes was always generous) was given . . . [to Milnes] by the impoverished young Patmore, who acted as amanuensis during the compilation of the work. In those days Coventry Patmore was disturbed by Keats: “Keats’ poems collectively are, I should say, a very *splendid* piece of paganism. I have a volume of *Keats’ manuscript letters by me*. They do not increase my attachment to him.”¹³⁵ Patmore was not alone in being disturbed by Keats’s ‘. . . paganism, and some people were anxious to attribute Keats’ beliefs to his biographer.’

In the dedication to the book, Milnes states that it was Frances Jeffrey who ‘did much to rescue [Keats’s early genius] from the alternative of obloquy or oblivion.’¹³⁶ He goes on to say that Jeffrey’s ‘generous sagacity perceived [Keats’s merits] under so many disadvantages.’ Of course, it was an exaggeration to assert, as Milnes does, that in 1848 Keats’s merits ‘are now recognised by every student and lover of poetry in this country.’ Milnes claims that in the poetical portion of the biography he has sought to confirm the then hazardous views of Jeffrey in 1820. To Milnes, the ‘familiar letters’ of Keats represent ‘the clear transcript of the poet’s mind,’ and one can find in the letters more than a vindication of the character of Keats the man. Keats the man possessed ‘moral purity and nobleness’ and this realization is as ‘significant as [the poet’s] intellectual excellence.’ Milnes believes that public opinion has ratified the judgements

¹³⁴ *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 293. The next two quotations are from the same source.

¹³⁵ Letter to H. S. Sutton, dated 26 February, 1847; quoted in *Milnes, Years of Promise* i 293.

¹³⁶ *LLLR* i v. The following quotations are from pages v-x.

of Jeffrey which were 'once doubted or derided' and also that this ratification reveals the prophetic soul of Jeffrey who 'anticipated the tardy justice which a great work of art' eventually would achieve. It seems that to the liberal-minded Milnes - who was familiar with Keats's love of Greek mythology - the fate of Keats had been sealed at the hands of the gods and goddesses who had favoured him with great genius but had also caused the public disregard of Keats, his physical illness and his early death. As for Keats's artistic abilities, Milnes is struck most by the genius shown in the richness of Keats's diction and imagery and quite astounded when he considers that all that Keats produced must be regarded as more of a promise than an accomplishment. Milnes refers to Keats as an 'adolescent character' and the 'Marcellus of the empire of English song' in whose 'moral history' Milnes has taken 'an especial interest'. The model that Milnes uses as a graceful tribute to Jeffrey's prescience is that of Marcellus, the son of C. Marcellus and Octavia the sister of emperor Augustus. He was born in 43 B.C., adopted by Augustus in 25 B.C. and was married to the latter's daughter Julia. The young man was probably intended to succeed his adoptive father but died two years later. 'He was a youth of much promise, and his death was regarded as a national loss and was lamented by Virgil in a famous passage of the *Aeneid* (vi. 861-87),¹³⁷ the reading of which so affected Octavia, the mother of Marcellus, that she fainted.'¹³⁸ This

¹³⁷ *Virgil*, with an English translation by H. Rushton Fairclough, 2 vols (Harvard University Press, 1967), i 566-570. In note 5 on page 567 of the book, Fairclough mentions that Marcellus 'died . . . in his twentieth year.'

¹³⁸ *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, compiled and edited by Sir Paul Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 260. Book vi has a pivotal role in many ways to the whole significance of the *Aeneid*. It consists of three parts: the first (1-263) tells of the preparations for the descent to the underworld, with strong emphasis on religious rights and sacrifices; the second (264-636) narrates Aeneas' journey through the underworld and his meetings with ghosts of his past; the last section (639-901) contains the meeting with Anchises in Elysium, his exposition of life after death and his account of the famous Romans waiting to be born. This book is also crucial in the development of Aeneas's character. Before the descent to the underworld he had often been frail and uncertain in resolution; during the journey to Elysium he is usually looking backward, filled with grief and remorse at the disasters of the past,

powerful model of both the tragic death of a promising young man and the prophetic power to perceive his qualities before his death is part of Milnes's rhetoric for establishing at once the character of Keats's achievement and the promise of all that he might have done had he lived.

Milnes says that he has taken the liberty of omitting some few unimportant passages of the letters he prints which referred exclusively to individuals or transitory circumstances, regarding this part of the correspondence as of a more private character than any other that has fallen into his hands. However, Milnes thinks that still there might be some people who would like him to omit more passages for their likely 'irrelevancy' and for the sake of 'the decent reverence that should always veil, more or less, the intimate family concerns and the deep internal life of those that are no more [i.e. dead].'¹³⁹ He quotes largely a letter of Wordsworth to a friend of Burns in which the writer believes that biography is an art the laws of which are determined by 'the imperfections of our nature and the constitution of society'. In other words, the biographer should work to the best of his abilities to portray the factual events round the life of the subject. The truth is not sought without scruple. It is to render moral and intellectual purposes. As those who are dead cannot speak of themselves and therefore are bound to silence, those who want to talk on their behalf should have 'a sufficient sanction' to open their mouth, because they are 'infring[ing] the right of the departed'. The case becomes more critical when the biography of an author is going to be written. The life of an author should not be pried into with diligent curiosity, and it should not

overwhelmed by the sufferings of others (Palinurus, Dido, Deiphobus) in which he had been involved; but finally Anchises's revelation of the Roman future which Aeneas must inaugurate strengthens him, makes him confident and determined that he will not fail. Aeneas returns to earth heartened and resolute. He is no longer hesitant because Anchises has 'fired his heart with passion for the great things to come' (889). See R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1985), 4 and 65.

¹³⁹ *LLLR* i xiv. The next quotation is from the same page.

be laid open with disregard of reserve. An author is different from a political figure who has had an active part in the history of the world because the former does not have a circle with whom he has acted. To write about and understand an author, especially a poet, is to read and understand his work, because if a poet's works be good they automatically contain within themselves all that is necessary for them to be comprehended and relished. That is why few memorials were written on the eminent Greek and Roman poets. Milnes pays close attention to Wordsworth's words when he wants to use the materials he had for writing the biography of Keats. He says that he could have prepared a 'signal monument' of Keats by selecting the circumstances and passages that illustrated the extent of his ability, and the 'purity of his objects and the nobleness of his nature'. In this way he might have written a 'monography, apparently perfect' which could have attracted the attention of people close to Keats. But he didn't.

Milnes was aware of Keats's social position and was interested in him from that perspective, although he took a more objective outlook in writing the biography from the point of view of literary politics. Both Brown and George Keats died soon after consigning their papers to Milnes, so that his biography could be additionally removed from the political controversy that inspired Brown's, even though, to a great extent, it built upon it in many other respects. Milnes had come to the conclusion that the best thing for him to do was to 'present to public view the true personality of a man of genius, without either wounding the feelings of mourning friends or detracting from his existing reputation'.¹⁴⁰ In his book, Milnes is at pains to stress that what he is doing is a 'compilation'¹⁴¹ of the facts and not a 'composition', wishing to stress his impartial

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* i xv.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* i vi.

outlook as to the circumstances of Keats's life.¹⁴² There is certainly a lack of analytical commentary in his biography. The poems and the letters were largely rivetted together by a framework of simple narrative prose, into which Milnes had placed the anecdotes and recollections he had picked up from Keats's surviving friends. He shows himself reluctant to probe into the poet's personal life as he was removed from the circumstances of Keats's time. But in providing a substantial number of Keats's letters in the biography, he risks encouraging the interpretation of Keats's life mainly at the expense of his poems. He believed that 'the memorials of Keats [should] tell their own tale;¹⁴³ but no doubt because 'too unrestrained use of them would offend Victorian propriety and would probably give a new lease of life to *Blackwood's* damaging accusation that Keats and his friends were not gentlemen.'¹⁴⁴ Milnes says that his points in the biography are impartial because after all he is a stranger to the poet. To attain this purpose, he leaves 'the memorials of Keats to tell their own tale . . . and [claims that his] business would be almost limited to their collection and arrangement.'¹⁴⁵ If he wanted to give his personal interpretation of the materials and treat them as his own work, he needed to rely on his 'ability of construction,' and would then have been tempted to 'render the facts of the story subservient to the excellence of the work of art.'

Milnes had a clear idea of who his potentially important readers were, because he was looking for ways to 'raise the character' of Keats in the eyes of those who

¹⁴² *Ibid.* i xix.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* i xvi.

¹⁴⁴ *MacGillivray* li.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* i xvi. The next quotations are from the same page.

possessed the power of evaluating and assessing works of art. Inaccurate information and plain falsehoods about Keats had been in circulation for thirty years, some inspired by adverse critics, others by well-meaning friends, and all had circulated indiscriminately among the reading public. With the passage of time, a principal task of later biographers became to combat this image of the diseased poet. In the biography, Milnes tries to clear away the misconceptions gathered round the character and poetry of Keats and then present his own image of him. He states:

I saw how grievously he was misapprehended even by many who wished to see in him only what was best. I perceived that many, who heartily admired his poetry, looked on it as the production of a wayward, erratic, genius, self-indulgent in conceits, disrespectful of the rules and limitations of Art, not only unlearned but careless of knowledge, not only exaggerated but despising proportion. I knew that his moral disposition was assumed to be weak, gluttonous of sensual excitement, querulous of severe judgment [*sic*], fantastical in its tastes, and lackadaisical in its sentiments. He was all but universally believed to have been killed by a stupid, savage, article in a review, and to the compassion generated by his untoward fate he was held to owe a certain personal interest, which his poetic reputation hardly justified.¹⁴⁶

Milnes assures his readers that he will present first-hand information about Keats's 'inmost life' from his letters and that the above opinion was far from the truth. So he feared that a portrait of Keats diverged from the general assumption, would hardly obtain credit and would seem to have been given from a partial point of view. In terms of his poetic career, Milnes's task was to show that Keats intellectually favoured 'simplicity and truth above all things' and disliked whatever was strange and extraordinary. He wished to show that Keats was a progressive writer who was always developing and always a critic of his own work, that Keats's models were 'always the highest and the purest' and therefore he was no Cockney. The excellence of Keats's works depended on his limited efforts. Being essentially self-directed, Keats

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* i xvii. 'his untoward fate' alludes to Byron's elegiac stanza on Keats in *Don Juan* (XI.lx). *LLLR* i xvi-xvii. Where passages from Keats's letters that are included by Milnes are cited, references are also given to Gittings's edition, or to Rollins's edition in the case of letter not included by Gittings. The next quotations are from the same page.

understood and avoided the faults of the writers he had associations with. He liberated himself at once not only from 'literary partizanship [*sic*]' and servile imitation of others but from the literary spirit of his own time.¹⁴⁷

Milnes claims above all that he simply acts as the editor of a life which was, as it were, already written. He denied himself the right of 'analysing motives of action and explaining courses of conduct.' He limited himself to what he had been told about Keats by witnesses who knew him personally. And he represented what was given to him as faithfully as possible. He does not expect his readers to agree with him over what he has written but to read and judge the contents for themselves. At the end of the Preface, he once more makes an implicit reference to Jeffrey's prescient mind concerning his 'previous admiration of the works of Keats.' To have read the works of Keats and to be sympathetic to Jeffrey's viewpoint is, to Milnes, the test of a reader's authority to approve or condemn his biography with competence.

Milnes altered the material that the letters represent freely. His strategy was a frank rejection of the Boswellian plan of writing a memoir; he avoids engaging with the details of Keats's personal life and in this way comes closer to Lockhart's more generalised method of writing his biography of Sir Walter Scott. (Departing from Lockhart's plan and similar to Boswell's is Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*). Milnes's book was not a biography to be ranked with either Boswell's or Lockhart's but it was, like these, written for the purpose of vindicating the character and advancing the fame of its subject. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood put Keats's name on the list of heroes ranking him with Homer, Dante, and Alfred the

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* i xviii. The next quotations are from pages xviii-xix.

Great.¹⁴⁸ But the public at large was unaware both of the taste of the Brotherhood for Keats and that it was Milnes's intention to spread the fame of the then obscure young poet in the spirit of the Brotherhood. More will be said about Milnes's connection with the Pre-Raphaelites later.

In general, Milnes tries to give a refined picture of Keats's family and friends and elevate their social position. At the very beginning of the biography he mentions that Keats's maternal uncle was 'an officer in Duncan's ship in the action off Camperdown'¹⁴⁹ and that Keats's parents had considered sending their sons to Harrow. Milnes also points out Keats's early association with Mr. Felton Mathew, 'a gentleman of high literary merit, now employed in the administration of the Poor Law.'¹⁵⁰ He uses distinctly respectful language and evokes aristocratic associations, as well as references to a successful business career, to link Keats with men of social standing:

It is now fifteen years ago that I met, at the villa of my distinguished friend Mr. Landor, on the beautiful hill-side of Fiesole, Mr. Charles Brown, a retired Russia-merchant, with whose name I was already familiar as the generous protector and devoted Friend of the Poet Keats.¹⁵¹

Milnes starts the biography of Keats with a reference to his meeting with Brown in a villa of a friend to elevate by association the social position of the poet and retrospectively to challenge the notion that he was a mere Cockney. Milnes's tendency to improve on the facts of Keats's life were aimed generally at an amelioration in social

¹⁴⁸ *Lives of the Poet* 46.

¹⁴⁹ *LLLR* i 5.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* i 14.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* i ix. MacGillivray remarks: 'The "retired Russia-merchant" had actually returned unsuccessful and bankrupt from his adventure abroad at the age of twenty-four (several years before Keats knew him) and thereafter lived thriftily on the legacy from his brother.' *MacGillivray* liii.

class and economic condition. He omits the name of Fanny Brawne and her circumstances not because of her intimate relationship with Keats in itself but because he thought that such issues were private in character and did not concern the reader. He wrongly believed that Jane Cox, the eldest child of the late Captain W. B. Cox, Mrs Reynolds's only brother, was 'the lady . . . [who] inspired Keats with the passion that only ceased with his existence'.¹⁵² Keats refers to her as Reynolds' wealthy Anglo-Indian cousin, the Charmian with 'a rich Eastern look.'¹⁵³ This might have served Milnes's general purpose if he was linking Keats to nabobism. It is extraordinary that Milnes did not mention Fanny Brawne's name, but it is evident that 'the decorum of the age also required the frequent suppression of the names in the published letters and a very general reference to the love-affair.'¹⁵⁴

Milnes regularly altered words in Keats's letters that he includes in order to give a more polished and polite version of his correspondence. This was the common habit of the biographers of the time; Lockhart in particular had modified and revised Scott's correspondence. Milnes is careful to omit the names of the persons who were Keats's

¹⁵² *LLLR* i 242.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* i 228 (*Gittings* 162). We can easily conclude that Milnes thought that it was Jane Cox and not Fanny Brawne who was Keats's mistress. Milnes condensed the information in his biography of Keats as an introductory memoir which he prefaced to his *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (1854). This book was published and reissued some 13 times in Milnes's lifetime and many more after his death. I have had access to the 1895 edition published after his death. In the memoir of this book, Milnes attributes the contents of Keats's letter of 14-31 October 1818 to his family in America - which contains some lines on Jane Cox - to Fanny Brawne (that indeed Fanny was a 'lady of East-Indian parentage . . . [with] rich Eastern look'). Given that Harry Buxton Forman's *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* came out in 1878, it is extraordinary that Milnes did not revise his views about Fanny. In his biography of Keats he believed that Jane Cox was Keats's mistress and now in the memoir he states that it was Fanny but then he wrongly takes Jane for Fanny. See Lord Houghton, *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1895), xxiii. Hereafter *Lord Houghton*.

¹⁵⁴ *MacGillivray* liii.

associates and were either alive at the time of the completion of the biography or had just passed away. For example, he omits Keats's comment, in a letter of 21 February 1818 to his brothers, on the Poet Laureate (in 1848) William Wordsworth when Keats accuses him of 'egotism, Vanity and bigotry.'¹⁵⁵ Such excisions were probably made out of an unwillingness to wound those who were still alive. Moreover, Wordsworth, then aged 78, was a venerable holder of the Laureateship. Milnes also omits consideration of Keats's religious opinions as, for instance, when his sceptical spirit doubts the worth of any orthodox faith.¹⁵⁶ Milnes was not willing to publish any thing about Keats's doubt. He totally omits Keats's lament on 'the history of . . . [Jesus] written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion'¹⁵⁷, his irreverence and his anticlericalism. Having to face the pressures of propriety and of some living friends led him to some suppression of apparent irreligion. Keats had said on 16 December 1818: 'I have scarce a doubt of immortality of some nature of [*for* or] other;'¹⁵⁸ Milnes changed this to: 'I have a firm belief in immortality.'¹⁵⁹ Apart from being sensitive about Keats's erotic life and views on religion, Milnes altered Keats's letters so as to make them, in his own judgment, readily acceptable and he extended these alterations down to the very texture of Keats's language. Busy with politics, society and his own poetry, he did not do much to ascertain the accuracy of his texts or verify his facts. His friend Coventry Patmore was his amanuensis, and it is possible that the errors in some letters are owing to Patmore's transcription according to his own standards or mistakes he made while copying them. Milnes himself commonly

¹⁵⁵ *LLR* i 103 (*Gittings* 69).

¹⁵⁶ *Lives of the Poet* 51-52.

¹⁵⁷ *LLR* i 267 (*Gittings* 230).

¹⁵⁸ *Gittings* 175.

¹⁵⁹ *LLR* i 246.

regularized the often loose and informal spelling and syntax of Keats's letters, which was common practice in the early nineteenth century. The poet's spelling was inconsistent, his punctuation erratic. Milnes anxiously changes Keats's sentences so that they will be socially acceptable according to the norms of a broad educated mid 19th century readership. In particular, he improves words or expressions which seem to have a whiff of the Cockney about them or which have sexual connotations.¹⁶⁰ Milnes uses the term 'manliness' a couple of times in describing Keats's features so as to counter the feminized image of him disseminated by Shelley, Byron and Hunt. Referring to Keats's character he remarks that he had a 'strong will, passionate temperament, indomitable courage, and a somewhat contemptuous disregard of other men'¹⁶¹ Keats courageously met all criticism of his writings and did not care much for the article that had attacked him. He only showed sympathies which are current among all human beings. Keats the man combatted 'poverty and pain . . . [and] love of pleasure was . . . subordinate to higher aspirations.' Neither was he barren of enjoyment because Keats was endowed with a 'mercurial nature'. Keats did not abuse his imaginative mind. He purified what his imagination seized as a sensuous object and rarely went beyond the limitations of what a moralist would sanction. His conduct was beyond the understandings of a practical man. Milnes emphasizes that Keats led a 'plain, manly, practical life.'¹⁶² Milnes displayed a common Victorian sense of propriety and to conform to that his evasions and omissions were strategic. He made all these alterations to preserve Keats's dignity, according to his understanding of it, and thus to counter the currently received understanding of Keats as socially and morally suspect, or sexually ambiguous.

¹⁶⁰ See Appendix 2.

¹⁶¹ *LLR* i xviii-xix.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* i 74.

Milnes's work certainly now seems to lack both selection and design. He excerpts from Keats's letters and sometimes gives them in their totality. His contribution to understanding the achievement of Keats can seem minimal: rather in the collecting of materials than in informed commentary on either Keats's life or writings. He considered that his job was to gather relevant materials on Keats and to present his life plainly, and indeed the biography seems notable for its useful information rather than any idea of how to read Keats's works in relation to his life. The facts he gives can sometimes be simply wrong as, for example, when he states that Keats had brown eyes instead of blue or that George Keats was older than John.¹⁶³

Some of Milnes's omissions and alterations to Keats's letters can be quite drastic. On the evening of 19 November 1816, Keats had gone to Haydon's house to see him drawing pictures. On that day Haydon drew Keats's picture, and the following day Keats sent him a letter expressing his gratitude. Milnes discusses the contents of the letter without giving the letter itself. He does not mention the name of the addressee, nor the date on which the letter was sent to him. In describing the letter, he borrows Keats's words and phrases without acknowledging them. Compare the two following excerpts. Milnes uses the grammatical device of indirect quotation to reiterate Keats's words:

The morning after one of these innocent and happy symposia, Haydon received a note inclosing the picturesque Sonnet

“Great Spirits now on Earth are sojourning,” &c.¹⁶⁴

Keats adding, that the preceding evening had *wrought* him *up*, and he *could not forbear sending it*.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Noted by Marquess in *Lives of the Poet* 44.

¹⁶⁴ The rest of the poem has been omitted from the text of Milnes's account of Keats's letter.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* i 28. Emphasis mine.

Keats starts his letter with the following:

Last Evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following—Your's unfeignedly John Keats—

Great Spirits now on Earth are sojourning
¹⁶⁶

Milnes omits a long paragraph from the beginning of Keats's letter of 14 September 1817 to Jane and Marianne Reynolds. He does not give the addressees or the date on which the letter was written. Omitting the word 'Jane', he starts the letter abruptly with: 'Believe me, my dear -----, it is a great happiness to see that you are, in this finest part of the year' He omits the words 'Jane' and 'Marianne' everywhere in the text and transcribes the names Philips and Brown as 'P----' and 'B----'. It would seem that Milnes detected some indecorous address towards women, because Keats asks Jane to 'Bathe thrice a week' in the 'sea,'¹⁶⁷ and so keeps them anonymous. It is only by reading the whole letter that we see that it might have been written to some female friends, as Keats uses the phrase: 'My dear girls' towards the end.

Milnes believed that 'Mr. Bailey died soon after Keats.'¹⁶⁸ He had somehow been misinformed, because, at this time, Bailey was archdeacon of Colombo in Ceylon. On the appearance of the book, he wrote to announce his survival and only then did he give what he had in his possession to Milnes for future editions.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Gittings* 2.

¹⁶⁷ *LLR* i 50 (*Rollins* i 158). *Gittings's* collection does not include this letter.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* i 62.

¹⁶⁹ *Sidney Colvin* 535.

Milnes gives the reader some information that is part of Keats's letter to his brother Tom, mistaking Haydon for Reynolds and wrongly assuming that Keats has written the letter to Haydon. He does not give the exact date of the letter either.¹⁷⁰ He includes the following poem in that fragment of letter but neither Gittings nor Rollins records it:¹⁷¹

SONNET.

This mortal body of a thousand days

After this poem, Milnes places the following passage:

The pedestrians passed by Solway Frith through that delightful part of Kirkcudbrightshire, the scene of "Guy Mannering." Keats had never read the novel, but was much struck with the character of Meg Merrilies as delineated to him by Brown. He seemed at once to realise the creation of the novelist, and, suddenly stopping in the pathway, at a point where a profusion of honeysuckles, wild rose, and fox-glove, mingled with the bramble and broom that filled up the spaces between the shattered rocks, he cried out, "Without a shadow of doubt on that spot has old Meg Merrilies often boiled her kettle."¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ *LLLR* i 158.

¹⁷¹ In a letter of 11, 13 July 1818 to Reynolds, Keats says: 'We went to the Cottage and took some Whiskey -- I wrote a sonnet ['This mortal body . . .'] for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof--they are so bad I cannot transcribe them--' (*Gittings* 122). The sonnet should have appeared, for example, after the following line from the above letter to Tom written on 10, 11, 13, 14 July 1818: 'I was determined to write a sonnet in the Cottage--I did--but it is so bad I cannot venture it here--' (*Gittings* 128). From a letter to Bailey written on 18, 22 July 1818 we recognise that Keats did not keep the poem: 'I had determined to write a Sonnet in the Cottage. I did but lauk [*sic*] it was so wretched I destroyed it' (*Gittings* 138). However, Brown had copied the poem before its destruction (Brown, *Life of Keats* 103) and mentioned only its first line in his book. Milnes had access to Brown's copy of the poem and so it was first printed in his *LLLR*. Jack Stillinger states that he has copied the sonnet from Milnes's *Life*. 'No MS has survived, and 1848-- printed from a now lost transcript by Brown . . . and at one time intended to include the poem in his "Life" of Keats . . . is our sole source.' See Jack Stillinger, ed, *The Poems of John Keats* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 272, 613. Hereafter *Stillinger*.

¹⁷² *LLLR* i 160

The above passage is placed so that it seems to be a continuation of the account of the journey in the same letter to Haydon or part of another letter of Keats. But neither of these inferences would be true, as Milnes is, in fact, borrowing Brown's words and images, without acknowledging them, to describe Keats's feelings when they were in Scotland on their walking-tour. Milnes puts only the last line in quotation marks.¹⁷³

In one instance, Milnes changes male characters to female ones:

Mrs. S. met me the other day. I heard she said a thing I am not at all contented with. Says she, "O, he is quite the little poet." Now this is abominable;¹⁷⁴

Gittings and Rollins give a more accurate version of Keats's letter. Keats was in fact not talked to directly:

Mr Lewis went a few morning[s] ago to town with Mrs Brawne they talked about me--and I heard that Mr L Said a thing I am not at all contented with--Says he 'O, he is quite the little Poet now this is abominable --¹⁷⁵

Also, in his letter of 3 October 1819 to Haydon, Keats writes: 'I have no doubt that if I had written Othello I should have been cheered by as good as [*sic*] Mob as

¹⁷³ Brown's account of the same story is:

Then, as we walked, by Solway Firth, through that delightful part of Kirkcudbrightshire, the scene of 'Guy Mannering', I talked of Meg Merrilies, while Keats, who had not yet read that [nove]l, was much interested in the character. There was [a] little spot, close to our pathway,--'There', he said, in an instant positively realizing a creation of the novelist [*sic*], 'in that very spot, without a shadow of 'doubt, has old Meg Merrilies often boiled her 'kettle!' It was among pieces of rock, and brambles, and broom, ornamented with a profusion of honey-suckle, wild roses, and foxglove, all in the very blush and fullness of blossom. While we sat at breakfast, he was occupied in writing to his young sister, and, for her amusement, he composed a ballad on old Meg. Brown, *Life of Keats* 49.

¹⁷⁴ *LLR* i 258.

¹⁷⁵ *Gittings* 212.

Hunt.’¹⁷⁶ Milnes, however, omits ‘by as good as Mob as Hunt’ thereby removing Keats’s political comparison and the characterisation of the kind of audience he was expecting to welcome his writings:

I have done nothing, except for the amusement of a few people who refine upon their feelings till anything in the *un*-understandable way will go down with them. I have no cause to complain, because I am certain anything really fine will in these days be felt. I have no doubt that if I had written “Othello” I should have been cheered. I shall go on with patience.¹⁷⁷

In addition, Milnes puts a letter of June 1819 to Dilke among the letters of June 1820, thereby violating the chronology of the letters and ignoring the atmosphere and the events that prompted the feelings that Keats expresses in this one:

As brown is not to be a fixture at Hampstead, I have at last made up my mind to send home all my lent books. I should have seen you before this, but my mind has been at work all over the world to find out what to do. I have my choice of three things, or, at least, two,—South America, or surgeon to an Indiaman¹⁷⁸; which last, I think, will be my fate. I shall resolve in a few days. Remember me to Mrs. D. and Charles, and your father and mother.¹⁷⁹

Milnes also changes the order of words within sentences in Keats’s letters. In a letter of December 1818 - January 1819 to his family in America Keats said: ‘Hunt has asked me to meet Tom Moore some day—so you shall hear of him;’¹⁸⁰ Milnes changed

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 332. Henry Hunt (1773-1835), the celebrated political orator on the occasion of the massacre in St. Peter’s Fields, Manchester, had staged a procession in London. Keats also refers to him in a letter of 17-27 September 1819 to his family in America.

¹⁷⁷ *LLLR* ii 10.

¹⁷⁸ In reply to an enquiry from Milnes, Dilke said his impression was that [this letter] ‘was written in the Autumn of 1819.’ Hyder Edward Rollins, ed, *The Keats Circle*, 2 vols (Harvard University Press, 1965), ii 223. Hereafter *KC*. Rollins remarks ‘Someone penciled on this letter the note “1820 Shortly before he died.”’ *Rollins* ii 114, note 2. Clearly this letter was written between May 31, 1819, when Keats was thinking of becoming a surgeon on an Indiaman and June 9, 1819 when he abandoned the idea.

¹⁷⁹ *LLLR* ii 60.

¹⁸⁰ *Gittings* 180.

this to: 'Hunt has asked me to meet Tom Moore, so you shall hear of him also some day.'¹⁸¹ And in a letter of 14 February - 3 May 1819 to his family in America Keats wrote: 'How is it we have not heard from you from the Settlement yet? The Letters must surely have miscaried—'¹⁸² Milnes rewrote the passage as: 'How is it that we have not heard from you at the Settlement? Surely the letters have miscarried.'¹⁸³ Moreover, Milnes displaces Keats's original sentences within paragraphs as well as changing the place of paragraphs within the letters. He links Keats's smaller paragraphs to form longer ones and, quite often, breaks Keats's long paragraphs into smaller units. From time to time he adds his own words and sentences to the text of Keats's letters. He publishes poems that are not originally found in the manuscript of the letters and gives quotations that seem to be parts of what Keats wrote, but which now are no longer included in either of the major editions of the letters.

Milnes simply omits a lot of passages from the letters too. He excises massively from the beginning of some letters¹⁸⁴ - so that they begin abruptly - and from the middle or the end of some others, especially Keats's long letters to his family in America.¹⁸⁵ While editing the letters, Milnes often either misdates them and so distorts the chronology of Keats's life or does not give a date at all. Even in long or journal letters

¹⁸¹ *LLLR* i 250.

¹⁸² *Gittings* 210.

¹⁸³ *LLLR* i 257.

¹⁸⁴ Consider, for example, his version of Keats's letters of 10 May 1817 to Leigh Hunt and 28 September 1817 to Haydon, in *LLLR* i 42 and 60 (*Gittings* 8 and 24).

¹⁸⁵ Consider, for instance, his version of Keats's letters of 14 February-3 May 1819 to his family in America, 31 July 1819 (misdated as 2 August 1819) to Dilke, and 23 August 1819 to Taylor.

which were written over a period of time and so have different dates within them, Milnes shifts passages about indiscriminately.

Milnes tries to write the biography in such a way as both to satisfy Keats's friends and win over hostile parties. He avoids treating Keats's strictly private thoughts and feelings, but at the same time, does not strive excessively to compose a very polite and sophisticated picture of him. In order to convince his readers of the authenticity of his biography, Milnes chooses the separate elements: 'Life', 'Letters' and 'Literary Remains' for the title of his book in order to indicate the mix of first-hand evidence in his possession with an impartial representation of Keats's life. In writing, he relied to a great extent on the works of Keats and what Keats's friends gave to him. So the work presents itself as first of all a compilation with Milnes 'act[ing] simply as editor of the Life which was, as it were, already written.'¹⁸⁶ Many years later, Milnes remarked that his task had been 'little more . . . than to arrange and collect letters, freely supplied to him by kinsmen and friends, and leave them to tell as sad, and at the same time, as ennobling, a tale of life as ever has engaged the pen of poetic fiction.'¹⁸⁷ Milnes's book is, therefore, an extensive collection of letters and poems, arranged, to the best of Milnes's ability, chronologically, and connected by what are presented as the impartial comments of the editor-biographer. The letters, by themselves, and for the first time, show Keats's enthusiasm, intelligence, subtlety of mind, experience of life and books, intense interest in the problems of poetry, genial association with friends, and the outlines of the process of maturity he underwent as man and artist. MacGillivray says: 'the letters which Milnes published destroyed forever what remained of the

¹⁸⁶ *LLR* i xix.

¹⁸⁷ *Lord Houghton* ix.

Blackwood's legend of the fatuous bard of Cockaigne.'¹⁸⁸ In refutations of Shelley's legend of Keats's death, Milnes tries to illustrate Keats's courage, his good sense and his lack of concern about the campaign of vilification directed against him. Having quantities of important and informative material in his possession, Milnes takes pains to present himself as giving readers an impartial point of view by providing plain evidence, facts and truths as to Keats's life and leaving them to decide and draw their own conclusions.

Milnes's own social position, social prestige¹⁸⁹, dispassionate rationality, courteous manner, and restrained style of writing were influential in the reception of his book and served to persuade readers and turn the possible remaining wrath of adverse critics. His status as a member of the establishment and later the aristocracy, would 'provide an important confirmation of the cockney Keats's value and acceptance into the literary mainstream.'¹⁹⁰

. . . it [Milnes's book] served its purpose admirably for the time being, and with some measure of revision for long afterwards. Distinguished in style and perfect in temper, the preface and introduction struck with full confidence the right note in challenging for Keats the character of 'the Marcellus of the Empire of English song'; while the body of the book, giving to the world a considerable, though far from complete, series of those familiar letters to his friends in which his genius shines almost as vividly as in his verse, established on full evidence the essential manliness of his character against the conception of him as a blighted weakling which both his friends and enemies had contrived to let prevail.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ *MacGillivray* lii.

¹⁸⁹ His father was a Tory M.P. who had 'deserted a brilliant political career when it had scarcely begun. Richard Milnes longed for the glory his father had forsaken, and planned a quick launching of his career as politician and orator.' *The Cambridge Apostles* 43.

¹⁹⁰ *Lives of the Great Romantics II: Volume I* 124.

¹⁹¹ *Sidney Colvin* 537. Subsequent references to Colvin's book will be indicated by page numbers in parentheses.

The book was received respectfully on all sides. The old tone of contempt, towards Keats or towards his defender Milnes, did not make itself heard. 'The book appeared just at the right moment, when the mounting enthusiasm of the young generation for the once derided poet was either gradually carrying the elders along with it or leaving them bewildered behind.' (538) Thackeray as quoted by Colvin mentioned that, in his time, Keats and Tennyson were 'the chief of modern poetic literature!': word got about among younger writers and readers that Johnson wrote no English, Byron was not a great poet, Pope lacked imagination, Sir Walter Scott was a poet of second rate, and Keats was a genius who was to be ranked with Raphael. Of the three leaders of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Holman Hunt painted a picture of the lovers in *The Eve of St Agnes*, Millais one of *Isabella or the Pot of Basil*. Rossetti, a poet and painter, stood closer to Keats than these two. In his boyhood and early youth, Rossetti was in love with first Shelley, then Keats, then Browning. Keats and Coleridge had the strongest and deepest hold on him. He had urged William Morris to become a painter and not a poet believing that Keats had already done all that a poet needed to do in poetry (539). Of all Keats's poems, it was *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and *The Eve of St Mark* which most aroused the enthusiasm of Rossetti and his group (540). Answering a letter by Cowden Clarke on Morris's first volume of poetry, the *Earthly Paradise*, Morris writes of 'Keats for whom I have such a boundless admiration, and whom I venture to call one of my masters.'¹⁹² Elizabeth Barrett Browning paid in her *Aurora Leigh* (1856), I: 1004-1011, a well-known tribute to Keats saying that

By Keats's soul, the man who never stepped
In gradual progress like another man,

¹⁹² Quoted in *Sidney Colvin* 540.

But, turning grandly on his central self,
 Ensphered himself in twenty perfect years
 And . . . died, not young (the life of a long life
 Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
 Upon the world's cold cheek to make it burn
 For ever;)¹⁹³

The interesting thing is that because of the effects of Monckton Milnes's book and the enthusiasm of various groups of university men and poets and artists, and especially the younger generation, the previous contempt for Keats was fading away and being silenced from soon after the mid-century and in this movement Milnes's biography was a central document.

III

JEFFREY AND MILNES IN DIALOGUE: POETIC SELF-EDUCATION IN THE LETTERS

Milnes regrets Jeffrey's late August 1820 criticism of Keats's *Endymion* and remarks:

On looking back at the reception of Keats by his literary contemporaries, the somewhat tardy appearance of the justification of his genius by one who then held a wide sway over the taste of his time, appears as a most unfortunate incident. If the frank acknowledgement of the respect with which Keats had inspired Mr. Jeffrey, had been made in 1818 instead of 1820, the tide of public opinion would probably have been at once turned in his favour, and the imbecile abuse of his political, rather than literary, antagonists, been completely exposed.¹⁹⁴

It is probable that Milnes had read Jeffrey's lament of August 1820 that he had not noticed Keats's works earlier and his additional regret in the recent edition of his

¹⁹³ Quoted in *The Critical Heritage* 296.

¹⁹⁴ *LLLR* i 200.

collected articles of 1844 that he did not expose Keats's merits more widely to literary society. He dedicated his biography of Keats to Jeffrey.

Jeffrey was 'the most influential and respected critic of the day. Traditionalist in principle, he was deeply affected by the new Romantic sensibility.'¹⁹⁵ Only gentlemen wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* as, in a letter to his brother, Jeffrey explains: 'the publication is in the highest degree respectable as yet, as there are none but gentlemen connected with it.'¹⁹⁶ Jeffrey's personality and new methods in criticism influenced the public widely and gained high popularity; within a month of their publication his articles were estimated to be read by 'fifty thousand thinking people.' In his time 1802-1829, he was, in the opinion of Macaulay, 'more nearly a universal genius than any man of our time.' Talfourd, Lamb's friend and editor, asserted that Jeffrey '... continued to dazzle, to astonish, and occasionally to delight multitudes of readers, and at one time to hold the temporary fate of authors in his hands.' For 26 years Jeffrey remained in control of the *Review* and directed its policy. He had himself wanted to be a poet and writing to his sister from Oxford, he said that he should 'never be a great man unless it be as a poet.' He was a Whig champion in art and literature.

Jeffrey's August 1820 article on Keats is almost entirely about Keats's *Endymion*. He reprinted the article in 1844, expanding the final part mainly with quotations from *The Eve of St Agnes* and the 'Ode to Autumn'. Jeffrey observed, 'I still think that a poet of great power and promise was lost to us by the premature death of

¹⁹⁵ *The Critical Heritage* 202.

¹⁹⁶ Francis Lord Jeffrey, *Essays from the Edinburgh Review*, with biographical introduction by Hannaford Bennet (London: John Long LTD, MCMXXIV), 7. Hereafter *Essays from the Edinburgh Review*. The following quotations are from the same source pages 7-8, 11, and 15.

Keats, in the twenty-fifth year of his age; and regret that I did not go more largely into the exposition of his merits, in the slight notice of them, which I now venture to print. . .

. I hope to be forgiven for having added a page or two to *the citations*,—.¹⁹⁷ In October 1829 in an unsigned review entitled 'Felicia Hemans', Jeffrey wrote that since the beginning of his critical career in the *Edinburgh Review* he had seen a 'vast deal of beautiful poetry pass into oblivion, in spite of our feeble efforts to recall or retain it in remembrance . . . the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley . . . are melting fast from the field of our vision.'¹⁹⁸

After reading Milnes's biography, Jeffrey wrote a letter to the author on 15 August 1848 to express his gratitude to him for the dedication of the book. He wrote:

. . . the perusal . . . has soothed me, thro' many uneasy hours—and still continues to cheer my time of convalescence—
There are few names with which I shud [*sic*] so much wish to have my own associated as that of poor Keats.—I never regretted anything more than to have been *too late* with my testimony to his merits: and you may therefore judge how gratifying it now is to me, to find these names united in your pages, and that tardy vindication recognised, by so high an authority, as having contributed to the *rescue* of his fame— . . . The tragedy [*Otho the Great*] is a great failure—and makes one wonder that the author shud ever have imagined that it was part of his mission to effect a complete revolution in the dramatic literature of his age!— . . . The prologue to the *Eve of St Mark* seems to me the most faultless of these relics—and likely, if finished, to have grown into something even more exquisite than the *Eve of St Agnes*—¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Francis Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), ii, 373. Hereafter *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*. It is interesting to note that Christopher North accuses Jeffrey of having neglected Keats and lapsing into silence for 8 years following his first article of August 1820 on *Endymion* (and a brief reference to the *Lamia* volume): '[Jeffrey] . . . praised Keats, it is true, but somewhat tardily, and with no discrimination; and, to this hour, he has taken no notice of his *Lamia and Isabella*, in which Keats's genius is seen to the best advantage; while, from the utter silence observed towards him in general, it is plain enough that he cares nothing for him, and that it is not unjust or unfair to suspect the insertion of the article on *Endymion* was brought about by a Cockney job of Hunt's or Hazlitt's.' *KC* ii 248.

¹⁹⁸ *Edinburgh Review* (October 1829), 1, 47. Quoted in *The Critical Heritage* 203.

¹⁹⁹ *KC* ii 248.

There are considerable additions in Jeffrey's 1844 version of his article on Keats's *Endymion*. He increases the quantity of passages that he quotes from *Endymion* and *Isabella* and puts in some description and commentary on them. He brings in 'Ode to Autumn' and adds some stanzas of the *Eve of St Agnes* to the text of the article. But by far the most interesting addition is Jeffrey's moralisation of Keats's taste; he states that:

. . . the glory and charm of the poem [*The Eve of St Agnes*] is in the description of the fair maiden's antique chamber, and of all that passes in that sweet and angel-guarded sanctuary: every part of which is touched with colours at once rich and delicate – and the whole chastened and harmonised, in the midst of its gorgeous distinctness, by a pervading grace and purity, that indicate not less clearly the exaltation than the refinement of the author's fancy.²⁰⁰

Just as Jeffrey attributes these new aesthetic and moral bearings to Keats's poetry in his 1844 article, Milnes also moralizes Keats's character in similar terms in the dedication of his biography to Jeffrey.

In his collection of the poet's letters, Rollins records 252 letters of Keats to his various correspondents. Out of these Milnes included some 82 letters in his biography, in full or in part; in some cases only a reference to a letter is given without any quotation from it. Milnes rarely comments upon passages in the letters having to do with imagination, the poetical faculty, the calling of poetry, and so on, which have since become commonplaces in studies of Keats; nor does he develop the relation between such passages and the poetry beyond what Keats himself does in the letters. He uses the letters to develop his idea of Keats as living a poet's existence but lets them speak for

²⁰⁰ *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* ii 387.

themselves. Milnes concludes that Keats's friends attributed his gentle and courteous manner and 'defective sympathy' towards women to his 'pardonable conceit of conscious genius'. When Keats showed any signs of interest in women, it was rather because of his wish to satisfy his vanity than to awaken the element of love in himself. Milnes argues that this was not an appropriate judgment about Keats because, unlike the common run of humanity he was endowed with a faculty for thought and feeling that set him apart:

the careful study of the poetical character at once disproves these superficial interpretations, and the simple statement of his own feelings by such a man as Keats is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the most delicate and wonderful of the works of Nature—a Poet's heart. For the time was at hand, when one intense affection was about to absorb his entire being, and to hasten, by its very violence, the calamitous extinction against which it struggles in vain.²⁰¹

Towards the end of the biography, Milnes expresses his intention to defend Keats's 'originality of . . . genius.'²⁰² He believes that in every poem Keats wrote, one can find something of the style and manner of preceding writers. The source of Keats's productions was his literary studies and constant reading of the works of those who preceded him. Indeed, this was the habit of many versifiers of the time; nevertheless Keats was successful in getting access to the 'inmost penetralium of Fame'²⁰³ because of his original genius. Keats looked to his masters for inspiration. His works were reconstructions and not imitations, because they always contained something that the works of his models did not. Keats's poems included 'some additional intuitive vigour'. Moreover, in a large sense, Keats's poems, wonderful as they are, represent more 'the

²⁰¹ *LLLR* i 172-3. Clearly Milnes is referring to Keats's Negative Capability letter of 21, 27 (?) Dec. 1817, to his brothers George and Tom, *LLLR* i 92-94 (*Gittings* 42-3); and a letter of 27 Oct. 1818, to Richard Woodhouse about 'poetical character'. *LLLR* i 221-222 (*Gittings* 157).

²⁰² *Ibid.* ii 51.

²⁰³ *Ibid.* ii 52. The next quotations are from pp. 52-3.

records of a poetical education than the accomplished work of the mature artist.' Milnes emphasises that 'this is in truth the chief interest of these pages; this is what these letters so vividly exhibit.' Affirming again that Keats was a great poet, he concludes:

Day by day, his imagination is extended, his fancy enriched, his taste purified; every fresh acquaintance with the motive minds of past generations leads him a step onwards in knowledge and in power; the elements of ancient genius become his own; the skill of faculties long spent revives in him; ever, like Nature herself, he gladly receives and energetically reproduces.²⁰⁴

Milnes clearly does not regard the letters as integral documents, to be considered as texts in their own right, as some might do today. He does not make aesthetic inferences from the letters or offer generalisations exhibiting a theory of poetry for Keats. Keats's original genius is defended against the charge of producing derivative verse by reference to the letters which record his habits of reading in order to educate himself as a poet. The poems themselves should, in the light of the letters, also be read as the record of an education in poetry. The 'Literary Remains' are arranged largely, though not perfectly accurately, in chronological order; so that taken together with Keats's already-published volumes, it was for the first time possible to take a general overview of Keats's poetic career. A selection of the poems in order of composition is for the first time made to show Keats's extraordinary growth as an artist in the four years which separated the beginning and the end of his literary life and the large group of letters throws much additional light on the poems.²⁰⁵ But above all for Milnes they sketch the outlines of a career which must be regarded as both a concentrated period of self-education and an incomplete process of maturing.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* ii 53.

²⁰⁵ *MacGillivray* lii.

IV

RESPONSES TO *LLR* IN THE PERIODICALS, 1848-50

The *LLR* was widely reviewed. Although Croker, Lockhart, and Wilson were still active, both *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* ignored the book. The old antagonism of the days of Gifford was powerless to rouse new adverse criticism of Keats's poetry. After the publication of Milnes's *LLR*, political feeling ceases to influence criticism of Keats; in fact, the time had come when Leigh Hunt, who was jailed for libelling his Prince, could be considered as a not impossible candidate for the office of Poet Laureate.²⁰⁶ His successful rival was Tennyson, one of the few who expressed a strong distaste for Milnes's work, in his angry lines *To —, After Reading a Life and Letters*. The young Tennyson of the Cambridge Apostles had expressed delight in the newly-discovered poetry of Keats. His occasional and general commendations in later years, for example that 'there is something magic and of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he wrote',²⁰⁷ were sincere. But he was shocked in 1848 to see that a poet's private life might be exposed to throw light on his art, and he feared that one day there might be a similar life of Tennyson.²⁰⁸ We return to a consideration of the reviews of Milnes's biography, all of them written during the period 1848-1850.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* liv.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in *MacGillivray* liv.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* liv. The subtitle of the poem composed in 1849 reads "Cursed be he that moves my bones." *Shakespeare's Epitaph*. Hallam Lord Tennyson as quoted by Christopher Ricks says: 'My father was indignant that Keats' wild love-letters should have been published; but he said he did not wish the public to think that this poem had been written with any particular reference to *Letters and Literary Remains of Keats* (published in 1848), by Lord Houghton.' Ricks remarks that throughout his life Tennyson profoundly disliked inquisitive biography. Since Houghton (R. M. Milnes) was a friend of Tennyson for whom he had secured a pension, Tennyson wished to veil the poem. Houghton's biography (Aug. 1848) came before the poem (published in *The Examiner*, 24 March 1849, as *Stanzas To—*; then *Poems*, 6th edition (1850). The epigraph appeared in 1850. There is not a unanimous agreement on the identity of the

Influenced by Milnes's revisionary account of Keats's character and death, all of the reviews state that Keats died of consumption and insisted that the reviews in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* did not kill him outright. The article in *The American Review* distinguishes between 'Keats, *the poet*' and 'Keats, *the man*' and thinks of Milnes as the best possible biographer of the poet because the two are different from the social and literary point of view and have little in common with each other.²⁰⁹ This recognition gave Milnes an understanding which allowed him to remain disinterested and detached from his subject. Keats was financially troubled but he was a genius. Milnes was socially well-to-do but literally dull. He makes only a small personal contribution to the narration of the events in the biography and there are only about 'fifty pages of [Milnes's] such crystal-flowing prose'.²¹⁰ It was a universal belief that Keats had suffered a premature death at the hand of the reviewers because of the myth propagated by Shelley's *Adonais* and Byron's well-known elegiac stanza of 1823 in *Don Juan* (XI.lx). The writer of the review stresses that Milnes contradicted the received views as regards Keats's death, remarking:

It was a double pity that Keats should have so died; pity for the whole craft of reviewers, and pity for himself. To critics one and all, it was an ever-ready and ever-recurring reproach that one of them had 'killed John Keats.' On the memory of Keats, it threw more than a suspicion of weakness that he had let a critic kill him. But now comes Milnes and tells us—for which all thanks to Milnes—that Keats did not die of the reviewers at all; but of a disease to which, if to succumb be a weakness, still it is a nobler weakness and one more worthy of a poet. Keats died of love.

person to whom the poem has been addressed. See Christopher Ricks, ed., *The Poems of Tennyson*, 3 vols (Harlow: Longman, 1987), ii 297. Hereafter *The Poems of Tennyson*.

²⁰⁹ *American Review*, 8 (1848), 603.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* 604. The next two quotations are from the same page.

The writer then tries to find the logic behind the opinion that Keats was killed by the reviewers. He points out that they must at least have hastened his death by their abuse of Keats for being a 'Radical poet'. But Keats's correspondence shows that he was not excessively annoyed or angry at the reviewers even though he talked of fighting with them.²¹¹ 'Keats was not the man to die of a reviewer's lead, in the way commonly believed, at least,'²¹² argues the review. It goes on to assert that Leigh Hunt embalmed Keats with honeyed words and had previously caused injury to Keats by the bad model which his style presented to the young poet.²¹³ With regard to Keats's letters, they are clearly both honest and natural and faithfully represent the character of the man who wrote them. The letters with their

great design . . . show clearly that there was nothing puling, or effeminate, or lackadaisical about John Keats.²¹⁴ Their style is mostly dashing and off-hand: they show him to be rather pleased with his uncertain and hap-hazard way of life, much more disposed to laugh at than lament over his debts and duns. Sometimes there is an air of quaint banter in them that reminds one of Charles Lamb, but in most of them, as well as in the sayings of his that have come down to us, the prevailing characteristic is strength of expression . . . the very best of the letters are those addressed to his brother George in America.

However, the review also records its opinion that Milnes did not need to waste his time in telling his readers that the harsh review of *Endymion* was 'dull', 'ungenerous' and

²¹¹ Not in a duel but, as he tells us in a letter to Benjamin Bailey on 3 November 1817, by calling Z, the writer of 'On the Cockney School of Poetry, No I', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* published in October 1817, 'to an account': *Gittings* 34; in a letter to J. A. Hessey on 8 October 1818, Keats says, 'my own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict:' *Gittings* 155; and in another letter to the George Keatses written on 14-31 October 1818, Keats says, 'it does me not the least harm in Society [for the *Quarterly*] to make me appear little and ridiculous:' *Gittings* 161.

²¹² *American Review*, 8 (1848), 605.

²¹³ *Ibid.* 606. The next quotation is from the same page.

²¹⁴ Clearly a reference to Hazlitt's view in his 'On Effeminate Character' that Keats was effeminate.

'scurrilous', and because 'Keats was a Liberal; the reviewers were Tories. The Tory writers made it a principle to caricature and vilify all liberal authors.'²¹⁵ The English Literature of the time was infested with political prejudice. Keats's reviewers were not accountable for his death because he died of consumption two years after the attack in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly's* articles. Consumption was in the family, and in any case he would have died sooner or later. George also died before reaching old age. The review concludes by accepting Milnes's principal contention: that Keats showed progressive improvement throughout his poetical productions. Milnes's book amply shows this development by arranging Keats's poems in chronological order.

Similar to the *American Review's* position on Keats's death, *The Athenaeum*, for its part, remarks that Keats was a martyr but he was not killed by the savage articles published in *Blackwood's* or the *Quarterly*. Keats, a poetic genius, was on the way to a fully recognised fame. Thought and action coalesced in Keats's poetry, such as 'The Cap and Bells', and this was because the poet had faced the hardships of life. The encounter did him good; his imagination was enriched thereby:²¹⁶

the new documents of Keats's life present us with a man not only penetrated with subtle imaginings, but sufficiently acquainted with, and prepared for, the stern experiences that awaited him in the outer world, and willing to suffer the trial for the sake of the artistic profit. Such are the very motives, notwithstanding their fantastic disguises, which we have always been accustomed to connect with his works.²¹⁷

Here is a general estimate of the character of Keats's achievement and the reasons for it which derives directly from a reading of the letters. They are beginning to take their place in reasoned criticism of the poet.

²¹⁵ *American Review*, 8 (1848), 608.

²¹⁶ *Athenaeum* (Aug. 12, 1848), 789.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* 789.

The article in *The British Quarterly Review* takes the same position as the *American Review* and *The Athenaeum* as regards the received account of Keats's death and remarks that Milnes's book greatly altered the idea that

[Keats was a] sort of lackadaisical, feeble, consumptive poet, who could be 'snuffed out by an article.' Thinking of his early death, his weak lungs, the perpetual recurrence of 'swoonings' and 'faintings' in his poems, and the universally accredited story of the 'Quarterly Review' having hastened his death—we could not help picturing him to ourselves as the sort of man to give way to all fantastical conceits, and to want the very characteristic of greatness—manly sense, and manly strength.²¹⁸

Again Milnes's biography is credited with having extirpated the old notion of the *Quarterly's* having killed Keats. It shows that he was by no means the fragile, puny creature many believed him to have been. The biography and the letters represent Keats as 'an energetic, irritable, proud, vehement man.'²¹⁹ Keats had studied medicine and knew that, because of his consumptive physique, he was doomed to an early death but till he was laid on his death bed he showed superabundant affluence of life and energy in all things he did. Indeed, his nature was a blend of pugnacity and sensibility to such a degree that it included convulsions of laughter and tears. One feels greater admiration and greater pity for Keats as a result of Milnes's volumes and Keats will always remain in English Literature as a poet of sensuous imagery, because he did not think much but gave way to sensations and emotional impulses. His plastic power of forming and assembling ideas was more active than his innovative and creative ones. It is 'quite clear that in no case would he have ever soared into the higher region of art.'²²⁰ Had

²¹⁸ *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 328-9.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 329.

²²⁰ *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 330. The next quotation is from the same page.

Keats lived longer he would have created the same kind of sensuous poetry that he actually produced because, even though he died young,

he was still old enough . . . to have shown as it were in *germ* every faculty he possessed. Plastic power he possessed, but he had none of the creative. Affluent in imagery, he was meagre in thought. . . . [he was a] creature of sensations . . . he seems not to have had his eye open to the universe before him, except that of a mere spectator, luxuriously contemplating its ever-changing hues, and myriad graceful forms. The mystery of life was no burden on his soul. Earth spread out before him, and was fair to see. To him it only presented flowers; and those flowers only presented their beauty. He questioned nothing; he strove to penetrate no problems. He was content to feel, and to sing. Now, although plastic power is indispensable to the poet, still more indispensable to a great poet is the creative and o'ermastering power of thought: the power of wresting from the universe some portion of its secret; of opening before men's eyes a vista, bright if small, into the mysterious future

This passage interprets various remarks in Keats's letters in such a way as to define the poet's limitations and is therefore another important instance of the use of the letters in criticism of the poet. It shows how Milnes's biography and Keats's letters have changed the reviewers' opinion as regards the poet's political tendencies, specifically that he had no revolutionary ideas and his imagery was not a means of denoting radical and liberal views. This appears to be the first time that Milnes's biography and Keats's letters combine to help fashion the notion of Keats as the author of artistic letters that by themselves portray him as a moral human being.

The review goes on to say that Keats did not understand himself and the world around him. He was weak in nature and therefore could not cope successfully with the highest difficulties of his art. He chose subjects like *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, and *Lamia* which were taken from the remote antique world rather than the living real world around him. The reviewer remarks that poetry must be timeless and not limited to place. The problem with Keats was his fanciful use of antiquity. He should have limited himself to the materials of observable human experience which alone have

poetic value. 'Poetry is *vision*, not *caprice*; the poet is Seer, not an intellectual Acrobat. He addresses the human soul, and does not merely titillate the fancy,' argues the review.²²¹ The result is that Keats's creations are neither truly Greek nor human.

As to the importance of Keats's letters, the writer of the review states that the letters can shed light on Keats's poetical works and explain the poet's relations with and reservations towards women and his sensuous and sensual poetry. The reviewer argues that Keats's sentence, 'I look upon *fine phrases like a lover*' is properly 'descriptive of his writings'.²²² He goes on to say that Keats certainly uttered many fine phrases in his letters that match with or explain many exquisite images in his poetic imagination. Keats's 'Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thought!'²²³ is a characteristic phrase in his letters that illustrates the poet by showing his intense delight in all sensuous and sensual enjoyments. The reviewer prints a substantial part of Keats's letter to his family in America written on 14 February - 3 May 1819, to explicate Keats's sensual desires:

How I like claret! When I can get claret, I must drink it. 'Tis the only palate affair that I am at all sensual in. Would it not be a good spec. to send you some vine-roots? . . . if you could make some wine like claret to drink on summer evenings in an arbour! It fills one's mouth with a gushing freshness, then goes down cool and feverless; then you do not feel it quarrelling with one's liver. No; 'tis rather a peace-maker, and lies as quiet as it did in the grape. Then it is as fragrant as the Queen Bees, and the more ethereal part mounts into the brain, not assaulting the cerebral apartments, like a bully looking for his trull, and hurrying from door to door, bouncing against the wainscot, but rather walks like Aladdin about his enchanted palace, so gently that you do not feel his step. Other wines of a heavy and spirituous nature transform a man into

²²¹ *Ibid.* 331.

²²² *Ibid.* 331. Emphasis reviewer's. In a letter to Benjamin Bailey dated 14 August 1819, Keats said, 'I am convinced more and more every day that . . . a fine writer is the most genuine Being in the World—Shakespeare and the paradise [*sic*] Lost every day become greater wonders to me—I look upon fine Phrases like a Lover—.' *Gittings* 277.

²²³ Quoted in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 331. In a letter to Benjamin Bailey dated 22 November 1817 Keats says, 'O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!' *Gittings* 37.

a Silenus, this makes him a Hermes, and gives a woman the soul and immortality of an Ariadne, for whom Bacchus always kept a good cellar of claret, and even of that he never could persuade her to take above two cups²²⁴

We can notice in connection with this passage that Maurice Buxton Forman is right when he says that Keats's "'Tis the only palate affair that I am at all sensual in' recalls the second stanza of 'Ode to a Nightingale'²²⁵ and Rollins states that the sentence is reminiscent of Keats's '. . . a little claret-wine cool out of a cellar a mile deep—with a few or a good many ratafia cakes—a rocky basin to bathe in, a strawberry bed to say your prayers to Florida in . . . ' which in turn is a clear reference to lines 11-13 ('O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been / Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth, / Tasting of Flora . . .') of the Ode.²²⁶ The passage is full of other images and expressions, beyond what the reviewer has adduced as an example of the relationship between the text of the letter and Keats's poetry, which are reminiscent of several other phrases and expressions in the verse of Keats. The 'palate affair' and 'grape' could well bring to mind Keats's 'Ay, in the very temple of Delight / Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine, / Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue / Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;' of the 3rd stanza in 'Ode on Melancholy'; 'to drink on summer evenings in an arbour' and 'Queen Bees' recalls 'The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine, / The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves' of the 5th stanza of 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Until they [bees] think warm days will never cease, / For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.' of the 1st stanza of 'To Autumn'; and 'like a bully

²²⁴ Quoted from Milnes's biography in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 331. *LLR* i 259 (*Gittings* 215).

²²⁵ *MBF* 301.

²²⁶ *Rollins* ii 56 & 64. See Keats's letter to her sister Fanny written on 1 May 1819. *Gittings* 209 (*Rollins* ii 56). The letter is not included in *LLR*. Consult Appendices I and II.

looking for his trull, and hurrying from door to door, bouncing against the wainscot,' evidently recalls the whole sensual and lustful pursuits of 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' in general and its 'What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? / What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?' of the 1st stanza in particular. The reviewer states that Keats wrote the above text in a 'wonderful gusto' that exhibits the sensuality of a poet and not a brute, and is the same spirit in which he wrote many of his poems. The reviewer then quotes a part of Keats's letter to C. W. Dilke of 22 September 1819 and remarks that it was written in the same strain as that of the previous passage:

Talking of pleasure, this moment I was writing with one hand, and with the other holding to my mouth a nectarine—how fine! It went down soft, pulpy, slushy, oozy, all its delicious *embonpoint* melted down my throat like a large beatified strawberry!²²⁷

The reviewer goes on to say that Keats's poetry is saturated with the same spirit that dominates his letters. The life of Keats as portrayed in the letters and Milnes's biography is a tragic poem that starts with sweetness and joy but ends in sadness. Borrowing Milnes's exact phraseology, the review maintains that as a young man Keats had high aspirations which are summed up in three small volumes of verse, some earnest friendships, one passion, and one premature death.²²⁸ He did not waste his time miserably because, as he says 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever!'²²⁹, he actually created one or two of those things of beauty. His earnest ambition brought him little achievement and his high hope was shattered by little fulfilment. He had a bright and sunny commencement but a quite dark ending. He felt 'Like a sick eagle, looking at the

²²⁷ Quoted in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 332. *LLLR* ii 18 (*Gittings* 302).

²²⁸ *Ibid.* 332. Milnes says, '. . . these pages concern one whose whole story may be summed up in the composition of three small volumes of verse, some earnest friendship, one passion, and a premature death.' *LLLR* i 2.

²²⁹ From *Endymion* I 1.

sky,²³⁰ and said that his epitaph must be '*Here lies one whose name was writ in water.*'²³¹

As to Keats's developing imagination, the reviewer remarks that he was precocious but at the beginning he was not a serious reader of literary works. He read Spenser's *Faerie Queene* out of a boyish ambition but the reading left a lasting impression on his mind. Chapman's translation of Homer was another book which deeply affected the poet. 'Poetry was a genuine impulse in him' and his letters show that 'he regarded poetry as the business of his life', argues the reviewer. To endorse the view that Keats had a great zest for composing poetry, the reviewer prints several important passages from Keats's letters. In a letter to J. H. Reynolds dated 17, 18 April 1817, Keats says 'I find I cannot exist without poetry—without eternal poetry.'²³² He goes on to say that he must dedicate his whole day to the composition of poetry. Half a day will not be enough. He becomes restless if he happens to stop composing poems for a while. This is an interesting point to observe, because as the reviewer remarks, this is the first time that Keats emerges as an escapist poet who seeks refuge in the beauties and wonderful world of his poems testifying to the fact that his essential

²³⁰ This must be a direct reference to line 5 of Keats's poem, 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles':

My spirit is too weak - mortality
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
 And each imagined pinnacle and steep
 Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die
 Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.

.....

See *Barnard* 99.

²³¹ Quoted in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 332.

²³² *Ibid.* 332. There is no date or reference to the addressee of the letter in the review. I have located it in Milnes's biography. *LLR* i 35 (*Gittings* 7).

creative life was separate from the political radicalism of his day. This letter was written around the date when Keats's *Poems* (1817) was published in April and was attacked six months later in October by *Blackwood's*. Keats's 'shorter poems were all sudden impulses' as if written merely to rid him of the painful facts of life.²³³ This view is supported by another letter of Keats to J. H. Reynolds written on 19 Feb. 1818 in which the poet puts forward the grand themes: 'voyage of conception', and 'delicious, diligent, Indolence!', and states that after composing a poem, the poet wanders with it, muses on it, reflects on its content, prophesies upon it, and dreams upon it until his mind becomes quiet and stale.²³⁴ The reviewer agrees with Milnes when he says that Keats's imagination was relieved by writing down its effusions; he did not care much for the poems themselves once they were composed. As the letters suggest, the poems became the means for the poet to express his individual nervous life. 'Ode to a Nightingale' and other poems would have been destroyed had it not been for the efforts of Charles Brown to save them. It is through reading his letters that we come to understand Keats's views about the rules of poetry, for although Keats seems largely to be defying the laws of poetic taste, he had his own definition of what poetry should be. The reviewer prints the three famous Keatsian axioms on poetry:

1st, . . . poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance. 2nd. Its touches of beauty should never be half way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight. But it is easier to think what poetry should be, than to write it. And this leads me to

²³³ *Ibid.* 333.

²³⁴ *Ibid.* 333. There is no date and reference to the addressee of the letter in the review. The reviewer gives a wrong page number as to the location of the letter which he has excerpted from *LLR*. He has mixed the contents of the previous letter (to J. H. Reynolds dated 17, 18 April 1817) with this one. *LLR* i 87 (*Gittings* 65).

Another axiom. That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.²³⁵

We must remember that from April 1817 to April 1818 Keats was busy thinking about *Endymion*. As the letters testify, it was during these twelve months that he puts forward most of his views about poetry and the art of composition, in his letters. At the end of the period and close to the publication of the poem, Keats's imagination was still centred upon luxuriant sensation and deficient in thought and was unable to use the wealth of his imagination in a more constructed, organised, and economical way. In his letter of 8 October 1818 to J. A. Hessey, Keats remarks that he is getting acquainted with his own strength and weakness after his *Endymion* came under attack by *Blackwood's*, the *Quarterly Review*, and the *British Critic*. He said that he knew *Endymion* was 'slipshod'. He had used all his abilities to compose the long poem. The poet says,

I have written independently *without judgment*. I may write independently, *and with judgment*, hereafter. *The genius of poetry must work out its own salvation in a man. It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself.*²³⁶

The reviewer states that the remarkable thing to notice in the above letter is that Keats nicely discriminates between the critical and poetical judgment, 'seeing very clearly that a poet cannot write by rule.' In the brief preface to *Endymion*, Keats told his critics that he considered the poem as a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished. The prejudgment of *Endymion*, coupled with Keats's own wording in his letters, increases our awareness of the disordered opulence of the long poem when we read it. The

²³⁵ *Ibid.* 334. Keats's letter to John Taylor on 27 February 1818. *LLLR* i 108 (*Gittings* 69-70).

²³⁶ *Ibid.* 334. Except for 'without judgment' and 'with judgment' which are emphasised by Keats the rest of the italics is the reviewer's. *LLLR* i 214 (*Gittings* 155-156). The next quotation is from the same page.

reviewer prints another passage on Keats's reservations towards women and the fact that he did not have 'a right feeling towards women'²³⁷ and did not know how to approach them, because when he was among them he had evil thoughts and could not speak or be silent; he was full of suspicions and therefore did not listen to them when they talked to him. He felt embarrassed and thought he must go home. Keats asked Bailey if this behaviour was because he looked at women with 'boyish imagination' which was immature and still struggling for perfection. Keats says that he rejoices in matrimony but women appear as children to him.²³⁸ He has not time for women because he does not need to approach them physically. Instead, his imagination is the greatest companion for him:

the mighty abstract idea of beauty in all things I have, stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. An amiable wife, and sweet children, I contemplate as part of that beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart.

Keats says that as his imagination strengthens he can bring all sublimities home to enjoy. This is reminiscent of Keats's lines in 'Fancy' specially lines 1-2 and 91-94:

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
.....

Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home. (91-94)²³⁹

However, Keats was not removed from the issues of daily life and knew that literature alone could not provide for the bread and butter of the day. In his letter of 22

²³⁷ *Ibid.* 334. From letter of 18, 22 July 1818 to Benjamin Bailey. *LLLR* i 175-176 (*Gittings* 136).

²³⁸ *Ibid.* 335. From letter of 14-31 October 1818 to the George Keatses. *LLLR* i 235-236 (*Gittings* 170). The next quotation is from the same page.

²³⁹ See *Barnard* 307-309.

September 1819 to C. W. Dilke, he states that he is fit for nothing but literature. Under no circumstances would he work for *Blackwood's* if he had to write for the periodicals of his day to earn money. He goes on to say that he is able to shine up an article about a subject of which he may have no knowledge, just like the Jews of the market who shine up the oranges they want to sell. He says that he has lost hope in poetry and tragedy because the two will not earn him money.²⁴⁰ On the same page, the reviewer states that the tone of the letter is 'not pleasant' because Keats wrote it with an air of 'presumption' and out of 'moral indifference', especially when he refers to the cheating of the 'literary Jews of the market'.

Towards the end of the article, the reviewer focuses on Keats's life and letters written from 1820 till his death in February 1821. He argues that Keats's view that

the chance of leaving the world impress[es] a sense of its natural beauties upon us! . . . I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are connected with the most thoughtless and happiest moments of our lives. . . . the simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again.²⁴¹

reveals his prescient knowledge that he must die. He flattered himself into hope through his love of life and its beauties so as to forget the darker side of it. 'There is a whole poem in that line' observes the reviewer. Spring is the season to which consumptive people look for recovery. Also, people on the verge of the grave look for spring which is the season of life and renovation, because its vernal breath brings freshness and vigour to their weak constitution. The theme of the transience of life and beauty is given expression in many poems of Keats, particularly his Odes. Upon having

²⁴⁰ Quoted in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 335-6. *LLLR* i 235-236 (*Gittings* 301-2).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* 337. *LLLR* i 56 (*Gittings* 359).

to leave England for Italy, Keats felt that he was going to die on the threshold of fame, but worse was to leave behind his love Fanny Brawne whose memory made life ever so precious and death ever so horrible. To illustrate the terrible time Keats had at that moment, the reviewer quotes him as writing in a letter on board the 'Maria Crowther', 'I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing.'²⁴² The same anxiety over having to lose Fanny Brawne is referred to when the poet says that even if he had a chance of recovery from disease, the passion for Fanny would kill him. As a result the poet has 'coals of fire' in his breast and asks whether he was born to bear that much misery and face a sad tragic end.²⁴³

The article in the *Democratic Review* suggests that it was Shelley who first expressed the wish to collect Keats's literary remains.²⁴⁴ Keats was little understood and appreciated by the public of his own time. Posterity had done little to expose the injustice of his contemporaries' estimate. Keats was censured by the critics who swayed popular taste but also was blindly applauded by his close friends. The indifferent reception of his works is not due to the bitter personal criticism of his poetry

²⁴² Quoted in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 339, from a letter of 30 September 1820 to Charles Brown. *LLR* ii 74 (*Gittings* 394). Neither *LLR* nor the reviewer mentions the name of Fanny Brawne.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* 339-340, from a letter of 1 November 1820 to Charles Brown, Keats's last but one letter written in Naples. *LLR* ii 78-9 (*Gittings* 397).

²⁴⁴ *Democratic Review*, 23, N. S. (1848), 377. Edmund Blunden says that Shelley together with John Taylor, Charles Armitage Brown and Charles Cowden Clarke were consulted, at different periods of time in 1821, to write a memoir of Keats. *Keats's Publisher* xxxviii. In a letter of November 29, 1821 to Joseph Severn, Shelley wrote, 'it had been my intention to have collected the remnants of his compositions & to have published them with a life & criticism.—Has he left any poems or writings of whatever kind, & in whose possessions are they?' *Letters of Shelley* ii 366. Knerr remarks that Severn did not reply to Shelley's query and no Keats papers found their way into his hands. See Anthony D. Knerr, *Shelley's Adonais: A Critical Edition* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1984), 12-13, 57, 257. Hereafter *Shelley's Adonais: A Critical Edition*.

only. The poet himself was to be blamed for his ungoverned fancy which spoilt the effusions of his genius. Encouraged by the lavish praise of his friends, he rushed into serious composition of poetry before age had ripened his taste, and before study had matured his consciousness of his real merits and capabilities. The review maintains:

Keats was yet almost a mere boy, when trusting to his rich command of language, his powers of imagery, and a kindred inspiration which Chaucer and Spencer had lighted in his breast, he hastily commenced and hastily concluded his 'Endymion,' a poem full of those very faults and beauties which might be expected from his temperament and his age. . . . his errors were redeemed by a richness of coloring . . . which ought to have disarmed criticism of its venom.²⁴⁵

Keats's greatest mistake was his lack of due attention to the labour required for ripening his taste. Through affectation or ignorance, he professed the utmost contempt for the rules of art, an 'error of judgment to which many young writers are prone'. There was a substantial interval between *Endymion* and *Hyperion* during which Keats reached a perfection of metre and a correctness and elegance of diction. The article goes on to canvass the usual opinions on Keats's being killed by a review. It remarks that there are many authors like Racine and Montesquieu who died of criticism. But Keats was not the 'victim of Journalism,' because as Byron claims, 'he who would die of an article in a Review, would have died of something else equally trivial.' Jeffrey's tone in the *Edinburgh Review* was sufficiently severe but, compared to the *Blackwood's* and *Quarterly's* opinions, there was more sense and manliness in his review of Keats's *Endymion* than might appear. Jeffrey's article had great influence in awarding Keats 'his proper rank among the poets of that poetical day.' Byron experienced 'pitiful jealousy' towards Keats's favourable treatment and used Lockhart's familiar 'Johnny Keats' to address the poet. He felt that apart from the wealth of diction of his youthful rival, Keats possessed the rare gift of invention, the epic power that he himself lacked.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 375. The next quotation is from the same page.

Keats was 'in the original sense of the word and in the meaning of its etymology – a poet.' Nevertheless, neither the obloquy of the reviews nor the envious bitterness of a friend was responsible for his fall: the attempts to crush him in the *Quarterly* only brought him more into notice as he himself confirms in a letter. The review concludes with the remark that Keats's death was occasioned by a disease hereditary in his family - consumption, but it was hastened by poverty and perhaps by love.²⁴⁶ As to Keats's correspondence with others, the review maintains that Keats's friendly communications with others were never meant for public attention. However, they deserve careful perusal because the poet's letters have close association with his poems and share many similar images. This is the first time the letters have been made public and they clearly unravel many of the unintelligible conceits expressed in his poems. They are important documents of artistic value:

they bear the impress of his particular turn of mind and of expression—the sudden melting of conceit into feeling—the quaint and unexpected epithet, the apparent unconnectedness of phraseology whose remote chain thought unexpressed [*sic*] supplies—all these are to be met with in these hasty notes of intimate greeting, and Keats can hardly be accused of introducing these characteristics for effect into his published works.

In other words, Keats's letters and his poems are of a piece. The last two lines bear witness to the fact that Keats the man and Keats the poet are not easily separable and distinguishable because Keats spontaneously and inadvertently fills his letters with the germs of poetic expression. A reading of the letters can evidently cast light on his poetry by showing it to be the product of his essential mind and sensibility.

The article in the *Democratic Review* is mainly dedicated to a belated re-examination of *Endymion*. At the beginning it claims that if Milnes were not known to

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 377. The next quotation is from the same page.

the reader by previous reputation, he would have been thought a person who merely belonged to the increasing throng who look for fame by associating their names with that of the young poet. Keats's letters are interesting documents that inform us about the personality of the poet and his views and dispel the illusion that such a man was killed at the hands of the hostile reviewers. Keats's letters to friends on their mutual friendship do not attract attention because their original charm is gone now. A few of them give a prosaic diary of a trip to Scotland and are barren of Keats's youthful ecstasy exhibited when he is among the flowers. A few others show his 'most erratic vagaries of speculation' and in two or three more the 'true wit and pleasantry sparkle with a glow, which only makes [the reader] wish the hand which scattered a pearl here and there, had been more lavish with its treasures.'²⁴⁷ Turning to *Endymion*, the article maintains that the poem has the beauties of a faery land or the rich and extravagant creations of an eastern tale. Keats's art is dependent on ancient mythology from which he draws stories which undergo his embroidery.²⁴⁸ Keats is admired together with Tennyson for their picture-making imaginations. From a reading of Milnes's biography, the writer of the review becomes aware that Keats was familiar with grief and, interestingly, had put some of his personal experience into his poetry, because we are told that in *Endymion* Keats interlinked grief and passion with his own existence. They become a part of his very being. Keats throws himself into the spirit of his actors, sees what they should see, acts as they should act, feels as they should feel, and speaks as they should speak. He possessed the full and perfect power of giving each emotion its own true utterance. A few lines from *Endymion* are enough to show the poet's high

²⁴⁷ *Democratic Review*, 26, N. S. (1850), 415.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 416.

claim to an eminent position among the poets.²⁴⁹ Keats did not look at things with a philosophic eye. Nature was animate for him and he was her worshipper and priest.²⁵⁰ The review finishes with a revealing comparison: that Shelley's imitators endeavour to combine metaphysics with poetry which results in unintelligibility; and that the poetry of the followers of Wordsworth smacks of 'maudlin simplicity'. It is the poetry of Keats that is imbued with a refined poetic taste that cannot fail to stimulate the pleasure of the reader.²⁵¹

The article in *The Dublin University Magazine* also looks at Keats as both poet and man. Keats started his poetic career at a time when the literary climate was

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 420. The reviewer cites the following lines from Book III of *Endymion* as a magnificent illustration of Keats's great poetic power and an example of exquisite beauty:

The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,
 And onward went upon his high employ,
 Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.
 And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head,
 As doth a flower at Apollo's touch. 785
 Death felt it to his inwards; 'twas too much:
 Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.
 The Latmian persever'd along, and thus
 All were re-animated. There arose
 A noise of harmony, pulses and throes 790
 Of gladness in the air—while many, who
 Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
 Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
 Felt a high certainty of being blest.

The above passage refers to the time when Endymion is bringing back to life the dead lovers in the temple beneath the sea. The resurrection imagery is of special importance and the last three lines show the reanimation of the lovers. The reviewer says that the poet takes part in the life of his characters by entering their heart and celebrates the lovers' enormous joy in coming back to the living world. See *Barnard* 182, for the passage.

²⁵⁰ This must be a reference to Keats's concluding lines of stanza IV and beginning lines of stanza V of his 'Ode to Psyche' where he says, 'I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired . . . Yes, I will be thy priest . . .'.

²⁵¹ *Democratic Review*, 26, N. S. (1850), 421.

dominated by the rationalism and the elaborated wit of the former age. He refused the employment of simple language and turned at once to conceit and the strong passions of man. He was acknowledged, fostered and revered amongst men of recognised merit and genius like Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Reynolds, Shelley, Haydon and others as 'an accredited, genuine-born poet'.²⁵² More than anything else Keats's letters caught the attention of his friends because of their 'multiplying the image of the man in every mood and temperament.' The review focuses at length on Keats's letters in order to show that they clearly bring before us the picture of Keats the man and Keats the poet. The letters were written on the spur of the moment. They represent the thoughts and emotions that came uppermost without effort or affectation. They are 'at once a clear exponent of the intellect, and a true picture of the moral qualities of the writer.' The review remarks that Keats put the same themes of beauty and poetical art into his poetry and letters. The poet never sought to make a connection between the two. The letters have the importance for posterity of being connected to his poetical works, something that he never thought of. His correspondence was personal. The letters give an insight into his moral nature: he was open and candid but also considerably sensitive. They show that he was conscious of his capabilities and constant and affectionate in friendship though quite outraged at a scene of oppression and injustice. He was prompted to act by the rulings of his heart. He was also, at times, gloomy, despondent and morbid. Borne along by impulse, he was predisposed to sensual excitement but 'that impulse was allied to, and ennobled by, the divine yearning of his soul after the

²⁵² *The Dublin University Magazine*, 33 (1849), 29. The next quotations are from the same page.

beautiful and the eternal.'²⁵³ The letters also disclose the fact that he devoted his soul to his poetry.²⁵⁴ Poetry was not an occasional relaxation or a marginal activity for him:

The end, and ultimate consummation of all his hopes, was to be a poet—a poet in its true and great significancy—such a poet as Milton and Shakespeare were, and Wordsworth is—a poet who would create new modes of thought, new ideals of possible existences, and cause new chords to vibrate in the heart of man. . . . he was both a great natural-born poet, and . . . has even in what he has left, achieved an immortal fame.²⁵⁵

The review argues that poetry came to Keats naturally²⁵⁶ because he had a heart to feel and a taste to relish tenderness and pathos. While there are many irregularities and obscurities in his early poetry, towards the close of his short career a more correct style and better observance of propriety of conception is evident. Both Milnes and Jeffrey have admired Keats's *Endymion* though it did not attract much public attention.

The reviewer notes that *Blackwood's* published a favourable criticism of Wordsworth's 'The Eclipse of the Sun, 1820' in May 1835 and praised the poem as 'the finest lyrical effusion of combined thought, passion, sentiment, and imagery within the whole compass of poetry.'²⁵⁷ In view of this extravagant praise, he wonders how *Blackwood's* editors could have let Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' pass unnoticed, had they seen it, because the poem is exquisitely imaginative. Influenced by a reading of

²⁵³ *Ibid.* 30.

²⁵⁴ This must be a reference to Keats's lines, 'I cannot exist without poetry.' *Gittings* 7.

²⁵⁵ *The Dublin University Magazine*, 33 (1849), 30.

²⁵⁶ In the letter to John Taylor written on 27 February 1818, Keats says, '. . . if poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.' *LLR* i 108 (*Gittings* 70).

²⁵⁷ Quoted in *The Dublin University Magazine*, 33 (1849), 32.

the letters, the writer of the review gives a modern interpretation of the Ode. The poet feels an overpowering charm creeping over him and benumbing his senses. He is cast into a sort of trance of tranquil pleasure. He wishes to fade away from mortality and so he longs for some ethereal draught that might spiritualise his being. The wish is fulfilled and the powerful charm has worked. The result is that he is with his 'light-winged Dryad of the trees.' He is wandering in 'verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways' covered up by 'embalmed darkness'. He keeps listening to the chanting of the bird. The place and the hour summon an image of 'easeful Death'. Keats finds it sweet to 'cease upon the midnight with no pain'. Death and mortality have no part in the immortal voice of the bird, because the song of the bird has charmed alike 'emperor and clown' long ago. But the association with the past breaks the spell and the 'plaintive anthem fades' and 'a glorious lyric is born into the world'.²⁵⁸ Similar to what *The British Quarterly Review* says about the close relationship between some passages in Keats's letter of 14 February - 3 May 1819 to the George Keatses and 'Ode to a Nightingale', the reviewer states that Keats's sentence, '[claret] fills one's mouth with a gushing freshness, then goes down cool and fearless' and his lines 'A draught of vintage that hath been / Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth' are of a piece. The reviewer maintains that there is a difference between poetry that is tastefully and harmoniously composed and 'the hot, burning lava-stream of Keats, thrown out in the eruptions of his various moods and feelings' and written with unpremeditated ease in his letters. Keats lacked dramatic powers and his delicate imagination could not conceive of the strong passions of human nature. The tragedy of 'Otho the Great' is a failure because it does not have originality and the characters do not have identities. Nevertheless, Keats's letters show that he possessed and exercised the faculty of self-

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 32.

annihilation and like Shakespeare, he threw himself into and lost himself in the characters of his poems.²⁵⁹ The review claims that

The language of Keats is . . . a more striking phenomenon than his unlearned classicality. The picturesque beauty of his phraseology, the imaginative pregnancy of his epithets, and the richness of his vocabulary is unsurpassed by any writer in the English language. It is one thing to have all the words in a dictionary at command; it is another to combine them in magical groupings.²⁶⁰

Towards the end of the article we are reminded once again that Keats was a creature of impulse and that his actions seldom resulted from any weighed principle. He had a good heart and 'the beautiful, moral, as well as physical, shed a halo round his thoughts, and raised his affections.' The reviewer evidently owes this assessment to a reading of Keats's letters, especially the letter of 22 November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey where Keats says, 'I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth.'²⁶¹ The charm of his character turned acquaintances into friends. Milnes's biography comes in time to gratify the public increase in recognition of Keats's merits and values. Keats also is fortunate in having Milnes as his biographer who is thoroughly aware of both his merits and defects. Milnes mingles simple language and picturesque expressions. An additional value of these volumes is their good criticism.

²⁵⁹ See Keats's letter to Richard Woodhouse written on 27 October 1818 where he says, '. . . as to the poetical Character itself . . . that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian [*sic*] or egotistical sublime; . . . it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—it has no character What shocks the virtuous Philosop[h]er, delights the camelion Poet A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body . . . the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures . . . the identity of every one in the room begins to [*for so*] to press upon me that, I am in a very little time an[*ni*]hilated. *LLLR* i 221-222 (*Gittings* 157-8).

²⁶⁰ *The Dublin University Magazine*, 33 (1849), 34. The next quotation is from the same page.

²⁶¹ *LLLR* i 64 (*Gittings* 36-37).

The article in the *Dublin Review* claims that it is difficult to find any other subject more likely to attract the attention of biographers than Keats's life. Keats's literary endeavours, the mystery and gloom surrounding his early death, the public opinion about the cause of that death, the symbolic importance of his death, and the loud indignation against Keats's alleged killers expressed in every quarter are interesting points that call for close examination. Unlike other youthful poets, Keats's published poetry does not shed much light on his character. He has left little trace of himself and his own personality in what he has written.²⁶² Keats's poetry is ideal and impersonal. Few of his poems deal with the realities of life and those which do so throw no light on the individuality of the author himself. But yet he touched upon general issues regarding human passion and feeling more fully and revealed himself more freely, though not specifically than any other writer in his poetry. There is almost nothing in his poetry about his own personal character and disposition. Nor do we normally see his views about common life, its hopes, its fears, its pleasures, and its passions. Unlike Milnes, the reviewer believes that the life of authors should be laid open because they are 'public instructors'.²⁶³ Probing Keats's life however is not easy as it was shrouded in vagueness and dreaminess. There is a kind of 'mystic paganism' in his poetic career.

There is everywhere throughout his works, a perpetual and all-pervading worship of Nature in her various forms, which strongly resembles the pantheistic cant that had become fashionable about the latter years of his life, and which would be downright pantheism, if it were not otherwise proved to be mere sentimentalism.²⁶⁴

²⁶² *Dublin Review*, 25 (1848), 165.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* 166.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 167.

The reviewer argues that Keats's earliest and best friend Charles Brown collected the materials for his Memoir on Keats many years before Milnes's biography. Brown was however held back by circumstances from publishing his Memoir. He transferred whatever he had collected to Milnes who had shown his intention of writing a biography of Keats. Milnes received lots of other valuable contributions and records that included Keats's letters to his friends and relatives from other people. As a result, the contents of Milnes's volumes do not comprise either an autobiography or a diary, even though Keats seems to have been projecting and actually preparing one. They contain a collection of Keats's letters to his family and some friends and include the account of his death given by his friend Severn. Keats was an ill-taught youth at school, with little Latin and no Greek. He was unfamiliar with all the ordinary subjects of early education except the Greek Mythology.²⁶⁵ Milnes believes that Keats's letters profess an apparent indifference to the well-known coarse and stupid articles in the Tory reviews to which the poet's death has so long been popularly attributed. The review states that it is unlikely that Keats's mind could have borne such a blow uninjured; however, his pride may have concealed the wound because there is sufficient trace even in the boldest of his letters that he felt the attack keenly. Although public opinion attributed the cause of Keats's death to the ferocious criticism of his poetry, there are many indications that this attribution is in great part true and well-founded.²⁶⁶ As to Keats's religious beliefs, the review asserts that 'his letters . . . do not contain any absolute avowal of a fixed and settled system of unbelief' However, ' . . . in his views even upon the first elements of natural religion, there is a vagueness and uncertainty which fills one with dismay.'²⁶⁷ He puts Jesus and Socrates on the same

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 168-9.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 170-173.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 176.

level as the only two men with disinterested hearts.²⁶⁸ It was as if the idea of a Providence had not entered his mind, because he was also thinking of some superior beings who might be pleased with any of his graceful thoughts.²⁶⁹ The review ends with the reminder that Keats's poetry shows the wonderful versatility of the author's mind and his extraordinary power, both in diction and in rhyme, but it lacks a fixed plan and suffers from an exceeding carelessness of composition.²⁷⁰

The article in the *Eclectic Magazine* affirms that Keats was a born poet who stood at the head of all born poets of nature. Michael Bruce, Henry Kirke White, Chatterton and above all Keats are among the inheritors of unfulfilled renown²⁷¹, all cut off in their opening promise.²⁷² Keats's model was the minor poetry of Shakespeare and Leigh Hunt was his favourite modern poet. Both Shakespeare and Hunt are masters

²⁶⁸ In a letter to George Keats written 14 February-3 May 1819, Keats wrote, 'Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind . . . I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two—Socrates and Jesus—their Histories evince it—.' *Gittings* 229.

²⁶⁹ A reference to Keats's sceptical attitude towards God and Eternity. Keats questioned the value of the Christian conception of life after death in his letter dated 30 September 1820 to Charles Brown, where he says, 'Is there another Life? Shall I wake and find all this a dream? There must be we cannot be created for this sort of suffering.' *Gittings* 394. Elsewhere, he says, 'I have scarce a doubt of immortality of some nature of [for or] other' *Gittings* 175; '. . . we are to be redeemed [from a vale of tears] by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven—What a little circumscribe[d] straightened notion!'. *Gittings* 249.

²⁷⁰ *Dublin Review* 25 (1848), 178.

²⁷¹ This is evidently a reference to Shelley's lines 397-401 in *Adonais*:

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; . . .

²⁷² *Eclectic Magazine* (July 1848), 409.

of eye-painting, that is, painting in words either from a close and minute observation of actual objects in nature or from subjects of fancy not less vividly presented to the mental apprehension.²⁷³ ‘ . . . eye-painting is the most striking quality in the poetry of Keats’ and originality the most marked feature.²⁷⁴ Hunt encouraged Keats as much as he could. And Keats chose the *Examiner* as the vehicle for publishing his early poetry. Hunt, the editor of this weekly, was himself a ‘true poet’. However, to be a friend of Hunt was to carry ‘the mark of the beast’²⁷⁵ in the estimation of the prejudiced critics of the time. Keats’s ‘On Reading Chapman’s Homer’ [*sic*] is a perfect specimen of what the sonnet should be but it became the target of ridicule from *Blackwood’s* which claimed that its author lacked knowledge of classical Greek.²⁷⁶

It has been doubted that the harsh and unjust criticism of Keats’s poetry inflicted a deadly blow on the sensitive mind of the poet, because ‘his early death has been wholly ascribed to hereditary consumption.’²⁷⁷ The writer of the article goes on to say that Keats was however so painfully affected by reading Gifford’s²⁷⁸ critique that he ‘burst a blood vessel in the lungs’ that never regained the same sound strength.²⁷⁹ Lord Jeffrey’s article in the *Edinburgh Review* was the only kindly, judicious and just criticism of Keats’s *Endymion*. But the generous admiration of Jeffrey came too late to soothe the wounded sensibilities of the poet. The article ends with the remark that no

²⁷³ *Ibid.* 410.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 412 and 414.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in *Eclectic Magazine* (July 1848), 411.

²⁷⁶ Byron’s lines from *Don Juan* probably influenced this view as well as *Blackwood’s*.

²⁷⁷ *Eclectic Magazine* (July 1848), 413.

²⁷⁸ Actually John Wilson Croker’s.

²⁷⁹ This is evidently a reference to Shelley’s view in the Preface to *Adonais*.

one since the time of Shakespeare has possessed the gift of pure fancy in a higher degree than Keats.²⁸⁰

The article in the *Eclectic Magazine* (Nov. 1848) remarks that formerly Keats was either extravagantly praised or unmercifully condemned. The first was the fruit of the general partialities of Keats's friends and the latter of the resentment of such friendship by those involved in party politics and those who had peculiar views about society and poetry.²⁸¹ Keats's association with radical poets like Hunt, Shelley, Hazlitt, Godwin, Reynolds and artists like Haydon incurred the harsh criticism of the Tory reviewers. He was thought to receive his guidance and directions from Hunt who, at the time, was eminent for his poetical originality and progressive political views. Keats's sonnet on the day that Hunt left prison confirmed the connection between the two. Keats's *Endymion*, which was dedicated to Chatterton, showed resistance to the limitations of the contemporary public taste. In contrast to what the Tory reviewers of late 1810s and 1820s had said about Keats and his poetry, the reviewer of the article states that Keats was a 'true poet'. He had the creative fancy, the ideal enthusiasm, and the nervous susceptibility of the poetic temperament. He is one of the greatest of the young self-taught poets, ranking above Michael Bruce and Henry Kirke White in this category. The article presents a mixture of important events in Keats's life and an account of some of his letters from the beginning of his literary career until his death in 1821. It tries to assess the place of each letter with respect to Keats's life, and with this aim in mind the article tries to show how Keats's literary abilities developed as he lived and how his life and letters can help us understand his poems better. By bringing forward a substantial portion of Milnes's lines in his preface to the biography, the

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 415.

²⁸¹ *Eclectic Magazine* (Nov. 1848), 340.

reviewer implicitly indicates that Milnes, as an impartial editor, paved the way for our new understanding of Keats as a great moral poet who revered simplicity and truth and did not abuse his imaginative faculty to fall into sensual excitement. He cared little for the article that was universally believed to have killed him.²⁸²

The reviewer maintains that Keats's intellectual ambition developed at Enfield school, then in high repute. Spencer [*sic*], Chaucer and Byron were Keats's especial favourites and he was fascinated by the tragic fate of Chatterton, the 'Marvellous Boy, that sleepless soul that perished in its pride,'²⁸³ which is frequently alluded to in his letters and poems. Keats was not happy with the idea that he choose medicine for his future profession. He noticed that every day he was making progress in his literary endeavours. The reviewer remarks that Keats's letter of 17 March 1817 to Reynolds portrays his disappointment with the years he spent to acquire medical knowledge. In the letter Keats considers only literary studies as 'undistracted' and desirable ones:

. . . Haydon has pointed out how necessary it is that I should be alone to improve myself . . . for a great good which I hope will follow; so I shall soon be out of town. . . . banish money—Banish sofas—Banish wine—Banish music; but right Jack Health, honest Jack Health, true Jack Health. Banish Health and banish all the world.²⁸⁴

²⁸² *Ibid.* 340-1.

²⁸³ Quoted in *Eclectic Magazine* (Nov. 1848), 341, from stanza VII of Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence'. The last two lines of the stanza are specially interesting as they are reminiscent of *The British Quarterly Review's* - inspired by Milnes's biography - statement that Keats's life began with joy and ended in sadness:

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 342. *LLLR* i 30-31 (*Gittings* 3). This is the first letter of 1817 (as recorded by *Gittings*) for which the *Eclectic Magazine* has shown enthusiasm. The last two lines echo *I Henry IV* II iv 476-481.

The reviewer goes on to say that Keats's imparting fantastic and imaginative ramifications to an idea, expressing joy when playing with literary concepts, and disregarding perfectly correct diction or imagery in his early poetry, are amusingly portrayed in his letter of 14 September 1817 to Jane and Mariane Reynolds.²⁸⁵ The poet did not feel at home with the 'fashionable society', argues the reviewer indicating that he was at odds with the accepted norms of his day. On probably 16th or 17th of December 1817²⁸⁶, Keats dines with Horace Smith and others. Later, in a letter to George and Tom Keats dated 21, 27(?) December 1817, Keats recounts the story of his dinner party and states that these men do not say things that make one feel. They are all alike; they follow the fashion of the day, and exhibit a certain mannerism when eating or drinking or, for example, handling the decanter. They talk about Kean for whom they do not have any sympathy. Keats says that he wishes to be with Kean and his company rather than these individuals. He regrets that he has to waste his time in a

²⁸⁵ Addressing Jane, Keats writes:

Give my sincerest respect to Mrs. Dilke saying that I have not forgiven myself for no [*sic*] having got her the little box of medicine I promised, and that, had I remained at Hampstead, I would have made precious havoc with her house and furniture—drawn a great harrow over her garden—poisoned Boxer—eaten her clothes—pegs—fried her cabbages—fricaseed (how is it spelt?) her radishes—ragouted her onions—belabored her *beat-root*—outstripped her scarlet-runners—*parlez-vous'd* with her french-beans—devoured her mignon or mignonette—metamorphosed her bell-handles—splintered her looking-glasses—bullocked at her cups and saucers—agonized her decanters—put old P----to pickle in the brine-tub—disorganized her piano—dislocated her candle-sticks—empted her wine-bins in a fit of despair

Ibid. 343. *LLLR* i 52 (*Rollins* i 28). The diversity of issues put forward in the letter is reminiscent of the diversity and variety of subjects in *Endymion*.

²⁸⁶ Rollins suggests that the dinner was probably a day or two after December 15. See *Rollins* i 193, n. 2.

similar party at Reynolds's.²⁸⁷ The reviewer does not continue with the letter but observes that in the same letter Keats has had two pleasant evenings with Dilke whose conversation has enlivened the poet's feelings. This is a very important remark because it is from a discussion with Dilke on various subjects that several things 'dovetail' in Keats's mind and remind him of Shakespeare as a 'Man of Achievement' and a man in possession of 'Negative Capability that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.' Similar to *The British Quarterly Review*, the article in the *Eclectic Magazine* states that Keats's letter of 27 February 1818 to John Taylor about the three axioms of poetry, shows on what poetical theories *Endymion* has been composed and what Keats's personal estimate of his own poetry was.²⁸⁸ Keats's letters to Reynolds on 14 March 1818 and 9 April 1818 are examples of his playful and imaginative character. In the second one, the vacillating character of Keats has something in common with his poetic genius:

I have many reasons for going wonder-ways: to make my winter chair free from spleen—to enlarge vision—to escape disquisitions on Poetry and Kingston Criticism²⁸⁹.—to promote digestion and economise shoe leather—I'll have leather buttons and belt²⁹⁰

The above passage illustrates the fact that Keats the man and Keats the poet are inseparable and Keats indeed lived with his poetic ideas. It is in the same letter that Keats talks about his new preface to *Endymion* and the fact that he will not bow to the

²⁸⁷ Quoted in *Eclectic Magazine* (Nov. 1848), 344. *LLLR* i 93 (*Gittings* 42-43).

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 344. *LLLR* i 108 (*Gittings* 69-70).

²⁸⁹ Jon Mee remarks, 'Keats may be thinking specifically of Kingston's embarrassingly literal-minded questioning of Wordsworth at the "Immortal Dinner"—ridiculed at the time by Lamb—about who was and was not a genius. The event was clearly in Keats's mind at this time.' Jon Mee, ed., *John Keats: Selected Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 393, not 81.

²⁹⁰ Quoted in *Eclectic Magazine* (Nov. 1848), 345. *LLLR* i 122-123 (*Gittings* 86).

public to gain their support of his poem. He says that he only kowtows to 'the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty,—and the Memory of great Men.' The colourfulness of the above passage corresponds to the variety and colourfulness of *Endymion*. Around this time, Keats was still undergoing self-education towards composing mature poetry. Keats's letter vividly records the progress of that education. Keats is moving from a man of sensuous and sensual fancies and dreams to a man with thirst for knowledge and philosophy. Keats's letter of 24 April 1818 to John Taylor shows the developments from the love of the luxurious to the full devotion of soul to philosophy.²⁹¹ However, Keats's philosophy is not easy to understand. For example, in his letter of 10 June 1818 to Benjamin Bailey, Keats says that his sister-in-law is the most 'disinterested' woman he has ever seen. But then he adds that 'to see an entirely disinterested girl quite happy is the most pleasant and extraordinary thing in the world. It depends upon a thousand circumstances.'²⁹² It is not clear what these 'thousand circumstances' are or why Keats is using the absolute degree, 'entirely'. Next, he says that we may thank God for the fact that a 'delicate being [a woman] can feel happy without any sense of crime.' And then he continues that this 'puzzles him' and he has 'no sort of logic to comfort him.' As soon as his first volume of poetry was made public in 1817, Keats was branded as a member of the 'Cockney School of Poetry', a thing that outraged his sensibility and sense of moral dignity.²⁹³ However, the correspondence of this period and the following year shows little reference to the famous attacks on him by the Tory reviewers. Instead of being snuffed out by a harsh article, in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats dated 14 - 31 October 1818 Keats says,

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* 345. *LLLR* i 130 (*Gittings* 88).

²⁹² *Ibid.* 345. *LLLR* i 147 (*Gittings* 100). The next quotations are from the same page.

²⁹³ *Ibid.* 346.

I shall be among the English Poets after my death. Even as a matter of present interest, the attempt to crush me in the *Quarterly* has only brought me more into notice, and it is a common expression among book-men, 'I wonder the *Quarterly* should cut its own throat.' It does me not the least harm in society to make me appear little and ridiculous.²⁹⁴

Change of climate was the only chance of improving Keats's health and prior to embarking on the journey to Italy, he wrote about his most secret grievances to Brown in a letter dated 30 September 1820. 'I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away.'²⁹⁵ The article ends with the view that Keats's literary remains are treasuries of intellect for their inexhaustible mines of wealth.

The article in the *Eclectic Review* remarks that Keats and his friends and also Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Crabbe, Coleridge, Southey, and Shelley were unknown forty eight years ago. Nobody encouraged them and nobody pushed them into notice:

Moore—sang to an unwilling, a careless, even a scoffing public. Crabbe, unable to find a purchaser for his first work; Wordsworth and Coleridge greeted by a chorus of ridicule that pursued them for more than a generation; Southey fain to turn from his delightful ballads to prose composition; Byron laughed at by the 'Edinburgh,' and denounced in the 'Quarterly;' Shelley goaded on his unhappy path by abuse, not so much of his infidel opinions, as of his sweet poetry; and Keats, in despair at the slow appreciation of his splendid works by the public, and the bitter scorn of his critics, requesting—but with no prophetic spirit—the words, 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water,' to be inscribed on his tomb.²⁹⁶

The initial resistance to Keats's poetry and the slow recognition of his talent is inscribed within a general history of Romantic verse which stresses its struggle to overcome

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 346. *LLLR* i 227 (*Gittings* 161).

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 347. *LLLR* ii 73 (*Gittings* 394).

²⁹⁶ *Eclectic Review* 24, N. S. (1848), 534.

ignorance and the limitations of public taste rather than mere party prejudice. This is a very practical view of the matter. The authors that are cited experienced considerable acclaim, some of it immediate as well as increasing with time. The shift in opinion about the major poets of the previous generation that is exemplified by the *Eclectic Review* here substitutes a conservative poetic taste for conservative political views as the obstacle to be overcome in order for a true appreciation of their literary worth to be achieved. Such a shift in the construction of the narrative of Keats's developing fame establishes his present worth on more solid ground than the older one of party politics that are no longer relevant. Milnes's volumes consist of the accounts of Keats's friends and his own correspondence. They illustrate his short career. Like Chatterton, Keats suffered a premature death but, unlike him, his poetry has exerted a great influence on the genius of some of the best writers of the generation following.²⁹⁷ Hunt was a sound critic and by his unlimited scepticism and extensive reading he aided Keats to look at life as 'a mere passing show.'²⁹⁸ Keats's *Endymion* had been dedicated to Chatterton and it was Keats's association with Hunt and Shelley that provoked the harsh criticism of his poem.²⁹⁹ The review ends with the interesting observation that the poetic faculty is vulnerable before adverse circumstances. This view is evidently a version of the earlier one – propagated and endorsed by Shelley and Byron – of Keats as a vulnerable and retiring soul crushed by party feelings and martyred in the same way that both Chatterton and Kirke White suffered martyrdom. Milnes, however, modified the view that Keats was soft and vulnerable in the face of harsh criticism, and the writer of the review makes use of this revision. He goes on to say, attributing the view to Milnes, that Keats lacked a moral purpose in his writings because his strongest sympathy was

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 535.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 538.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 541.

with external things and that his beliefs were those of a wavering sceptic. Byron maintains a fierce and scoffing presence – ‘Mephistopheles-like’ – in his poems and a distinctly loose morality forms the ground-work of his tales. Shelley is a high priest of doubt. However, Keats conceals his sceptical views in his chief poems but expresses them freely in his letters.³⁰⁰ Here another interesting use is made of the letters to enforce a distinction between poet and thinker which was not possible before Keats’s letters became available in substantial number. The impersonal character of Keats’s great poems, which conceal his private opinion, is foregrounded.

The *Edinburgh Review* states that the thought of Shelley was evolutionary, that of Keats marked by intensity. Shelley is characterised by a ‘fiery enthusiasm’ and Keats a ‘profound passion.’ Thinking was foreign to Keats’s temperament. Similar to *The British Quarterly Review* and *The Dublin University Magazine*, the reviewer quotes part of Keats’s letter to John Taylor on 27 February 1818 in which the poet states that poetry’s ‘touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery, should, like the sun, come naturally to the poet, [and] shine over him.’ Keats disliked poetry that surprises the reader, and affirmed that poetry ‘should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.’³⁰¹ In his poetry, Shelley adorned beauty; whereas it was the very essence of Keats’s. Keats had a thirst for beauty which was never satisfied. He was absorbed by it. The deep absorption excluded any consciousness of self. Also, the poet possessed the rare gift of invention. Sensuousness and sensuality were mixed with idealism in his poetry.³⁰² Keats’s nature

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 551.

³⁰¹ Quoted in *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1849), 424-5. *LLLR* i 108 (*Gittings* 70).

³⁰² *Ibid.* 425.

was Epicurean on one side, Platonist on the other, and both by instinct. He found enjoyment in the languor of rest and his poetry is a combination of beauty and repose.³⁰³

The reviewer is most probably adopting some of Keats's terminology from his letter of 14 February – 3 May 1819 to the George Keatses. Keats says,

This morning I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless . . . my passions are all asleep . . . if I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lilies, I should call it languor; but as I am, I must call it Laziness. In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body.³⁰⁴

The reviewer does not quote the above passage but records the lines that immediately follow it:

Pleasure has no show of enticement, and Pain no unbearable frown; neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance; as they pass me by they seem rather like three figures on a Greek vase—two men and a woman, whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. This is the *only happiness*; and is a rare instance of advantage in the body overcoming the mind.³⁰⁵

This is an important passage from an important letter, because it is related to 'Ode on Indolence' which was written in late May or early June 1819. John Barnard is right when he says that 'Ode on Indolence' is the only ode which is about Keats's own character and reflects a personal crisis.³⁰⁶ Keats does not seek to associate with the

³⁰³ *Ibid.* 426.

³⁰⁴ *LLLR* i 264 (*Gittings* 228).

³⁰⁵ Quoted in *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1849), 426. *LLLR* i 264 (*Gittings* 228). The emphasis reviewer's. *Gittings* records 'a Man and two women'.

³⁰⁶ *Barnard* 349-351 and 685. Stanza three of the Ode reads:

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
 Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
 Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
 And ached for wings, because I knew the three:
 The first was a fair maid, and Love her name;
 The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,

masked figures of Ambition, Love, and Poetry on the urn in the way that he does with the nightingale, Psyche and the Grecian Urn . As the poem reveals in the last two lines, he simply wants the figures to vanish from his 'idle spright / into the clouds and never more return.' Keats's versatile character made him live in the objects around him and this offered him relief. In a letter of 22 November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey Keats writes:

I scarcely remember counting on any happiness. I look not for it, if it be not in the present hour. Nothing startles me beyond the moment. The setting sun will always set me to rights; or if a sparrow were before my window, I take part in its existence, and pick with it, about the gravel.³⁰⁷

Similar to the reviewers of *The British Quarterly Review* and *The Dublin University Magazine*, the reviewer of the *Edinburgh Review* brings sample passages from Keats's letter of 27 October 1818 to Richard Woodhouse to endorse the view that Keats's character was absent during the composition of a poem. The reviewer goes on to say that Keats 'contra-distinguishes' the poetic genius to which he belongs from the 'egotistical sublime'. He refers to Keats's lines that a poetical character has no self because it lives in 'gust' and assumes the identity of the poet and the objects he contemplates and enters into.³⁰⁸ This method is practised in his poems when the poet

And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek, -
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

³⁰⁷ Quoted in *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1849), 427. *LLLR* i 67 (*Gittings* 38). The association and fellowship of Keats with the very essence of the things he sees or describes and the penetration into the soul of objects around him and his becoming part of their existence constitute a core argument of the following influential 20th-century critical books: *The Finer Tone: Keats's Major Poems* (1953) by E. R. Wasserman, *The Romantic Poets* (1953) by Graham Hough, *Romantic Imagination* (1961) by C. M. Bowra, and *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (1971) by Harold Bloom.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 427. *LLLR* i 221 (*Gittings* 157-8). *Gittings* records the word 'gusto' and not 'gust'. These two words are different but come from the Latin *gustus* meaning taste.

conceives of the various and alien forms of existence and the most remote ideas with the help of his versatile dramatic imagination. As a result, the character of each of his poems depends on the model Keats has been studying for that poem. Keats's intellectual faculty corresponded with his large imagination and versatile temperament. Unlike Shelley, he did not form systems, nor did he dispute about them. However, one can find germs of deep and original thought scattered even in his most careless letters. This is another instance in the history of Keats's reception where we hear that he was remote from the politics and keen intellectual debates of his day. Beauty and truth mattered to Keats and Shelley and the two were active in defining their relative worth. For Keats 'beauty is the visible embodiment of a certain species of truth,' asserts the reviewer.³⁰⁹ Keats's mind held conscious relations with that kind of truth. He was barren of philosophical thinking, because he rejected definitions and dogmas, and sometimes saw glimpses of truth in adverse systems. Like the reviewer of the *Eclectic Magazine*, the reviewer of this article records that Keats defined 'negative capability' as a power of 'being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason,' a capability that Shakespeare possessed enormously.³¹⁰ He possessed the powers of susceptibility and appreciation to an almost infinite degree. His mind appears to have been cast in a feminine mould. Shakespeare, unlike Keats, combined a masculine energy with a receptive temperament unfathomably deep. Keats possessed these qualities either deficiently or had not had time to develop them as he should.

Keats suffered from poor health and from a temperament that in the face of the harshness of life turned into morbid despondency. But he had many sources of pleasure and his kindly and tolerant behaviour procured him many friends. It has been

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 427.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.* 428.

commonly believed that adverse criticism had wounded him deeply. But Keats's letter of 8 October 1818 to J. A. Hessey, which is also cited in *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), rejects the charge. Part of the letter reads: 'praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works.'³¹¹ However, he was a sensitive soul. After visiting the house of Burns, he wrote in a letter of 11, 13 July 1818 to Reynolds, '[Burns's] misery is a dead weight on the nimbleness of one's quill: I tried to forget it . . . it won't do . . . we can see, horribly clear, in the works of such a man, his whole life, as if we were God's spies.'³¹² It was this extreme sensibility that made him shrink with 'prescient fear' from the world of actual things. For Keats, encountering reality was like dreaming of a cliff which was on the point of falling over one's head. The reviewer once again brings our attention to Keats's sensual and sensuous appetite and love of the beautiful. He observes that the most interesting of all his letters is that in which he talks about his first meeting with Jane Cox, as the embodiment of oriental beauty.³¹³ Both Milnes and the reviewer make the mistake of identifying Jane as Keats's mistress and the lady who inspired Keats with passion in his poetic life till his death. It is clear that Fanny Brawne and not Jane was Keats's source of inspiration. The reviewer argues that Keats had always been in love and the personal love for Jane was the concentrated form of the previous scattered and diffused ones for existences. He loved but death cheated him of the prize. The reviewer's positive approach towards Keats's love of Jane is another example of how critical opinion changed its attitude towards Keats's sensual imagery in view of his portrayal by Milnes as a tragic lover. It also shows that Keats was being

³¹¹ *Ibid.* 428. *LLLR* i 214 (*Gittings* 155-156).

³¹² *King Lear* V.iii.17. Quoted in *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1849), 429. *LLLR* i 171 (*Gittings* 122).

³¹³ *Ibid.* 429. See Keats's letter of 14-31 October 1818 to George and Georgiana Keats. *LLLR* i 228 (*Gittings* 162).

primarily constructed as a poet of 'ideal beauty' than one who was engaged with the world of politics and opinion.³¹⁴

The *Gentleman's Magazine* approaches Keats's writings in a bantering manner. Mocking the fate of his second and third volumes of poetry, the article remarks: '. . . though they were born alive, they were nearly strangled in the cradle by an old grey-headed, wrinkled sorcerer, the Editor of the Quarterly Review.'³¹⁵ Shelley knew that Keats would never become popular and others ridiculed him as being one of the 'Cockney School', the members of which drew their inspiration from

a stray muse or two residing at Hampstead or Enfield, while the other sisters were at their country seats at Keswick or Windermere, or living handsomely in the refectory at Abbotsford.³¹⁶

The above passage recalls the political antagonism of the Tory reviewers of Keats's time towards his poetry. It may also be a reference to Keats's regular meetings with his friends, Leigh Hunt and Charles Armitage Brown in Hampstead. In a letter to Benjamin Bailey on 3 November 1817 Keats denounces the attacks on Hunt in 'On the Cockney School of Poetry, No I', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* published in October 1817. Keats writes, '. . . [to the article] they have prefixed a Motto from one Cornelius Web Poetaster—who unfortunately was of our Party occasionally at Hampstead'³¹⁷

The reviewer goes on to say that Keats's literary remains, on the whole, add nothing special to his previous volumes. They are full of faults, exaggeration, carelessness, obsolete expressions, inapplicable epithets, fanciful analogies, and mythological

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* 429-430.

³¹⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine* (1848), 507.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.* 507-8.

³¹⁷ *Gittings* 34.

subjects that are suitable for an audience who departed from earth more than two thousand years ago. Keats's writings are good for a Greek audience not an English one.³¹⁸

For *Littell's Living Age* Keats was a careless writer; he never selected his thoughts, or cared for his diction. He did not labour and did not finish anything. The fruits of the Cockney School were striking pictures mingled with 'prosaic expressions, obsolete, half unintelligible words, and silly mannerisms.'³¹⁹ Keats lacked the knowledge of life, literature, and poetical art. The article is strongly against the judgement endorsed by Milnes that Keats breathed a new life into ancient mythology. Keats escaped the trammels of human themes and chose mythological subjects because the latter allowed him to write freely about improbabilities. The actual reputation of Keats depends less on what he did than on what he might have done had he lived to develop his genius.³²⁰ Keats was to die young because the seeds of his collapse were in his constitution. The article challenges Milnes's view that the attacks on Keats's poetry had nothing to do with his death. It suggests that the poet was self-opinionated and proud of his knowledge of literature and that he had a nervous temperament excited by disappointment and anger that hastened his death. It goes on to say that this might be an exaggerated view but it has some foundation.³²¹

The Prospective Review emphasises the fact that both Milnes's volumes and Keats's frank and careless letters give us a distinctive and clear picture of the poet's

³¹⁸ *Gentleman's Magazine* 509-510.

³¹⁹ *Littell's Living Age* 19 (1848), 20.

³²⁰ *Ibid.* 21.

³²¹ *Ibid.* 23.

character.³²² The reviewer says that from the time Keats came of age and became his own master, that is from the time he left his education and profession as a medical man, until the time of his death he was always moving about. This was induced by the demands of his health – that change of weather might improve it – and also by a habit of natural restlessness. Keats's letter of 14 September 1817 to Jane and Mariane Reynolds written from Oxford shows his enthusiasm in the natural elements of sky, air, sea and ocean's music. He also rejoices to think of Jane's sensations.³²³ He had to keep the fire of poetry alive through the rain of a perseveringly hostile criticism from which there was no escape. He had a frail and delicate mould, and at times felt that the touch of the grave was already on him. He felt that there was no money in poetry and so he debated whether to go on board an Indiaman in the post of a surgeon. To all this is added the misery of a hopeless passion, the love of his mistress.³²⁴ The sonnets of the *Literary Remains* bear witness to Keats's strong passions by their intensity. The last letters written in his absence from England also demonstrate Keats's despair at the realisation that his situation made it impossible for him to marry. Similar to *The British Quarterly Review*, the *Prospective Review* prints a part of Keats's letter of 1 November 1820 to Charles Brown in which Keats regrets that he would never be able to see Jane (and indeed Fanny Brawne) again and thus anything that reminded him of her would kill him.³²⁵ Keats was an escapist poet who wanted to find refuge in his poetry in order to cherish happiness. The reviewer takes a different approach to a reading of Keats's important letter of 22 November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey from that of the reviewer of the *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1849). In the opinion of *The Prospective* reviewer, Keats

³²² *The Prospective Review* (1848), 540.

³²³ *Ibid.* 544-545. *LLR* i 50 (*Rollins* i 158).

³²⁴ *Ibid.* 545.

³²⁵ *Ibid.* 546. *LLR* ii 78-9 (*Gittings* 396-7).

did not seek happiness beyond the time when he was with his subjects of composition because at that moment he could not be startled away from reflection. He believed that misfortunes happen and nobody can stop them and the best thing to alleviate the pain is to enjoy the pleasures of one's resources of spirit. He says to Bailey that if he sometimes seems to be cold towards others it is not because of a deliberate negligence but because of his being absorbed by the beauties around him. This feeling may last for a week and to such a degree that the poet starts to doubt the authenticity of his genuine feelings.³²⁶ The reviewer shifts his attention to a consideration of the cause of Keats's demise. He remarks that contrary to the public's presupposition, Keats, with all his sensitiveness, had more manliness about him. It is apparent from most of his letters that the wounds that rankled in his heart were not inflicted by the reviewers. The hostile reviewers doubtless struck at the heart of hope which they should have cherished, energised, and looked after. The attack however was not mortifying. Adonais was not, like Adonis, killed by a boar. He did not drink poison either. He was given drugs from the chalice of his enemies. He desired to achieve a name and fame and the reviews brought disappointment to his heart.³²⁷ Both *The North British Review*³²⁸ and *The Prospective Review* claim that Keats died of inevitable consumption and *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* did not kill him outright. Keats's mother and brother died of consumption and this alone accounted for the early death of the poet. In the opinion of Keats's contemporaries, the *Quarterly Review* was right in many ways and Keats and his friends knew it. Keats's rhymes were forced, awkward, and bungling. His thought and expression were marked with affectation and his style loose and vague.³²⁹ 'This is a

³²⁶ *Ibid.* 547. *LLLR* i 66-67 (*Gittings* 38-39).

³²⁷ *Ibid.* (1848), 548-9.

³²⁸ *The North British Review* 10 (1848), 85.

³²⁹ *Ibid.* 551.

mere matter of the moment: I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death. . . . the attempt to crush me in the "Quarterly" has only brought me into notice,' announces Keats in a letter of 14-31 October 1818 to George and Georgiana Keats, in order to reject the view that the adverse criticism might have snuffed him out.³³⁰ The article concludes with the view that the Literary Remains will not add much to the fame of the poet but Milnes's biography will be read eagerly by those interested in the character of the poet.³³¹

The article in *Sharpe's London Magazine* begins with the shrewd observation that Milnes dedicated his volumes to Lord Jeffrey, 'who first taught the world at large that Keats was indeed a poet.'³³² Keats's letters show that he was a moral being and it was only because of physical disease that there was some morbid feeling perceptible in his mind. The letters are unaffected, natural, eloquent, poetic, at times overflowing with drollery and humour, and about himself and his poems equally. Like any other poet, Keats was a charming letter-writer and his letters reflect and are nourished by zany conversations with his friends. Scattered through the letters are original reflections, liveliness, and pathos.³³³ The article states that Keats's Literary Remains are not as good as Keats's previously published works but they are interesting in the way they show Keats's genius. It concludes with the Shelleyan view that none of Keats's

³³⁰ *Ibid.* 550. The same quotation appears in *Eclectic Magazine* (Nov. 1848), 346. *LLLR* i 227 (*Gittings* 161)

³³¹ *Ibid.* 554-5.

³³² *Sharpe's London Magazine* 8 (1849), 56.

³³³ *Ibid.* 57.

contemporaries could have produced a poem as magnificent and beautiful as *Hyperion* before the age of 25.³³⁴

Keats's letters written at the early stages of his poetic career illustrate his boyish and disorganised imagination, a fact which accounts for the disordered and lavish use of imagery in his *Endymion*. However, his letters and poems arranged chronologically by Milnes show Keats's progressive development throughout his poetic career. The stern experience in dealing with the outer world at each stage of his life prepared him to reap the artistic profits of his suffering.

Adams, the reviewer³³⁵ in *The Westminster And Foreign Quarterly Review*, states that Milnes's biography is the first book of such kind to give readers both immense enjoyment and a sense of obligation.³³⁶ The tone for the entire review is set in the first paragraph; it trembles with emotion and the religious dimension to the language aims to make of Keats a martyred saint. Adams maintains that readers look with interest at Keats's points of strength or of weakness and enshrine him in their heart because they had been waiting long to hear about the material of Keats's life, in whatever form presented. The biography could not have been more fairly or more

³³⁴ *Ibid.* 59-60.

³³⁵ W. E. Houghton identifies the reviewer of the article as 'Adams' who 'seems to have been a clergyman'. Adams wrote 4 other articles, all signed 'Is. Is.' (perhaps an Oxford graduate?), in *The Westminster* entitled 'Poems of Alfred Tennyson', 51 (July 1849), 265-290; 'Woman's Mission', 52 (January 1850), 352-378; 'Poems of Ebenezer Elliott', 53 (April 1850); and 'Tennyson's *In Memoriam*', 54 (October 1850), 85-103. All of them exhibit a flowery and poetical style of writing. See W. E. Houghton, ed, *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, 4 vols (University of Toronto Press, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), iii 611. Hereafter *The Wellesley Index*.

³³⁶ *The Westminster And Foreign Quarterly Review*, 50 (January 1849), 349. Hereafter *The Westminster*. Further references to this article will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

honestly written, because the biographer is an impartial editor (349). The reviewer remarks that Keats's readers have now forgotten the controversy as to whether he was a poet or not. He has long been given the undisputed right of poethood. Keats was 'myriad-phased in thought, imagination, and feeling' (349). He was inspired by a spark of divine fire within and his poetry flowed like a full stream from his soul (350). The critic³³⁷ of Keats's *Endymion* knew little about the poem and could not communicate to readers the beauty, truth, grace, and loveliness that was in it. Critics are advised to praise the authors they do not understand. That is the least they can do, because even if praise may have little value, it makes people smile (351). Keats forgets himself in his *Endymion* and *Hyperion* and is forgotten by us. The reader of his poetry lives with the beauties and secrets of beings whose spirits are felt in the woods and on the waters of the world of the poems. The reader raises a temple to the Muses in his heart and it is in the same place that the lyre of the Fire-god accompanies divine songs. It must be stressed that Adams's article carries the most intensely emotional response among the reviews to the Keats who is presented in Milnes's *LLLR* and that this emotional response is expressed in distinctly religious terms. The reviewer develops one principal theme throughout the whole article and that is to present Keats as a secular saint whose life and works can be read as consistent with Christian ideals. The article is replete with powerful, intense, and emotional imagery that invokes quite distinct religious overtones. Words and expressions such as 'enshrine', 'reverential listener', 'passionate agony', 'the spark of divine fire within', 'infinite beauty', 'realization of angel', as well as various references to ancient mythology scattered throughout, seem designed to inspire the reader with spiritual and noble thoughts of Biblical tenor. There are two sets of religious patterns that the reviewer imbues his article with: Greek and Roman mythology and Biblical, especially Christian with New Testament overtones. It is

³³⁷ John Wilson Croker

suggested that only those who have a 'full appreciation of the spirit of the old mythology', who perceive 'its abstract truth and exceeding beauty', can thrill at the beauty of nature and feel at one with its spirit, have the right to look into the record of love between Diana and Endymion (353). Those who seek 'thoroughly definite and realised aims' in poetry and want it to have 'classical symmetry of form' find *Endymion* unreadable. A person whether of twenty or of sixty years of age must have a young soul full of sensation and capable of recognising beauty under any form in order to discover pleasure in *Endymion* (354). The passion with which Keats wrote his long poem would not come back to him after an interval of a year or years if he had stopped to gain experience to perfect his art. He regarded poetry as an art and composed mature poetry. Readers of *Endymion* canvass the views of those who condemned it and look for the reasons behind their contempt. This sparks not an angry mood but a feeling that is gentler even if less welcome. However, what is difficult for readers to understand is that those who gibed at Keats did not see in *Endymion* the promise of something better, for if a blind person can feel the sun's warmth he can feel its light too (354).

Adams argues that a 'positive union' exists between every great man and his mother. Mary of Nazareth always felt the beauty of the sayings of her Son. Keats's mother possessed an intense love of pleasure which hastened both the birth of John and his death (355). Keats always loved pleasure but he had the ability to restrain himself. He possessed a native nobility of mind. He never plunged himself into excessive indulgence because he also had a 'native manliness of soul' (355). He directed his powers to noble ends (356). Few letters are quoted in the article and even though Milnes had removed Keats's scepticism about religion and his anticlericalism, Adams' selection is noteworthy in the sense that he tries to provide a platform for discussing the poet's nobility of mind and spirituality by choosing letters that are addressed to the

young clergyman Bailey³³⁸ or contain references to him. The letters that are quoted at length are treated as texts of great power and insight carrying lessons for living well beyond any specific relevance to Keats's poetry. However, it is because they are the expressions of one attempting strenuously to live fully the life of a poet that they are particularly valued, and this aspect of Keats's life is assimilated to that of Christ, who led a day-to-day pragmatic life with divinity.

The reviewer quotes part of Keats's letter of 10 May 1817 to Leigh Hunt in which Keats conscientiously questions his poetical powers and his chances of achieving fame as a poet. To become a great 'thing . . . in the mouth of Fame' is a 'continual uphill journeying'. There is nothing 'more unpleasant . . . than to be so sojourning and to miss the goal at last.'³³⁹ In a letter of 14 September 1817 to Jane and Marianne Reynolds, Keats expresses his satisfaction at achieving a 'disinterested' self in the

³³⁸ Dorothy Hewlett observes that Bailey was 'the "man of principle," . . . addicted to moralisings and extracts from the more serious writers'; the young clergyman who later in life became Archdeacon of Colombo wrote in a letter in 1820 to Taylor that Keats had 'good dispositions and noble qualities of heart'; even though in the same letter Bailey accuses Keats of having loose moral principles and remarks that in Keats 'the Phantom of Honour is substituted for the truth and substance of Religion', in 1849 in writing to Milnes [then Lord Houghton], he said: 'he had a soul of utter integrity'; it seems that Bailey had read Milnes's *LLLR* and was by then 'wiser, . . . older and more experienced' and 'had learned to distinguish true character from the expression of opinions or "principles"'. See Dorothy Hewlett, *Adonais: A Life of John Keats* (London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd., 1937), 104, 135, 137-8. Hereafter *Dorothy Hewlett*. Gittings remarks that Bailey was a 'voracious reader' who was always 'cramming theology and philosophy'; See Robert Gittings, *John Keats* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1968), 145, 148. Hereafter Gittings, *John Keats*. Both Bailey and Keats believed – as Motion points out – that 'affection's heart-drops are the divinest cordials to human ills', and both shared 'the Wordsworthian faith that memory, fed with virtue, poetry and the vitality of youthful imagination would nourish them all in later years'. Keats finished book III of his *Endymion* – to which Adams attributes a spiritual and meditative cast – in Oxford in Bailey's lodging and the latter 'nourished *Endymion* at a crucial point in its development' especially when he lent Keats Hazlitt's *Principles of Human Action* and (possibly) the recently published *Characters from Shakespeare's Plays*. See Andrew Motion, *Keats* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1997), 187, 192. Hereafter *Motion*.

³³⁹ Quoted in *The Westminster* 356-7. *LLLR* i 42-43 (*Gittings* 10-11).

company of so ‘honest a chronicler’³⁴⁰ as Bailey who is keen to do ‘all good things’ in this world.³⁴¹ Adams remarks that such a character as Bailey as he is described in the above letter, loved Keats’s noble character in truth and in deed. Keats’s letter of 13, 19 January 1818 to his brothers emphasises Bailey’s disinterestedness and ‘spiritual honours’.³⁴² The reviewer of the article maintains that Keats’s letter to Bailey written on 8 October 1817 ends with the words: ‘Your sincere friend and brother, John Keats’.³⁴³ Quoting lines from Milnes’s biography, Adams states that there was a friendly and brotherly bond between Keats and Bailey and both shared the same fate because Bailey died soon after Keats.³⁴⁴ He comments on Keats’s letter of 22 November 1817 to Bailey and divides its contents into four main themes. The first part of the letter reflects Keats’s calm and philosophic tone of mind and his troubleshooting role as he tries to soothe Bailey’s anger at and disappointment with Haydon because of what the latter has written in a letter to the former. Keats had the ability to penetrate into the characters of his friends and give impartial judgment as to their characters. His friends such as Bailey acknowledged this quality in Keats’s character³⁴⁵ (357). The second part of the letter is dedicated to the celebrated speculation as to the nature of men of genius (357):

Men of genius are great as certain ethereal chemicals operating on the mass of neutral intellect—but they have not any individuality, any

³⁴⁰ From *Henry VIII* IV.ii.72, ‘such an honest chronicler as Griffith.’

³⁴¹ Quoted in *The Westminster* 357. *LLLR* i 52-53 (*Rollins* i 160).

³⁴² *Ibid.* 357. *LLLR* i 105 (*Gittings* 49).

³⁴³ *Ibid.* 357. *LLLR* i 62 (*Gittings* 28).

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 357. *LLLR* i 62. I have already discussed Milnes’s inaccurate information on Bailey’s death on page 50, note 147.

³⁴⁵ The reviewer excises Haydon’s name throughout the letter and only refers to him in his commentary as ‘some friend’.

determined character. I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self, Men of Power.³⁴⁶

The third part deals with the tenets of the poet's creed which as given to us by Keats are true to all eras in the history of man – the past, the present, and the future. Keats's tenets of poetry 'form part of the basis of the soul itself,' argues the reviewer (357).

Keats writes:

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, whether it existed before or not;—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty— . . . the Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream³⁴⁷—he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning,—and yet [so] it must be—Can it be that even the greatest philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections? However it must be . . .³⁴⁸

The last grand truth expressed in the letter is 'the supremacy of sensation over thought', maintains the reviewer (358). This is a state of feeling that is perceived in children. It is a state of feeling that is native to man. Keats states,

. . . O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts! It is 'a Vision in the form of Youth,' a shadow of reality to come—and this consideration has further convinced me, -- for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite speculation of mine, -- that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on earth repeated in a finer tone. And yet such a fate can only befall those who delight in Sensation, rather than hunger as you [Benjamin Bailey] do after Truth. Adam's dream will do here, and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human life and its spiritual repetition. But, as I was saying, the simple imaginative mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Quoted in *The Westminster* 358. *LLR* i 63-4 (*Gittings* 36).

³⁴⁷ *Paradise Lost*, VIII. 452-90.

³⁴⁸ Quoted in *The Westminster* 358-9. *LLR* i 64-5 (*Gittings* 36-37).

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 359. *LLR* i 65 (*Gittings* 37).

Keats's letter of 23 January 1818 to Bailey is again about the poet's skill in social negotiation and his interest in solving the problems of his friends. He writes to Bailey that he has always tried to win the goodwill of his friends by winning their esteem. Once he has made his own goodwill known to them, he has been able to act as a mediator to patch up the differences and quarrels between quarrelling friends such as Reynolds and Haydon.³⁵⁰ Keats remarks:

The best of men have but a portion of good in them – a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames, which creates the ferment of existence The sure way, Bailey, is first to know a man's faults, and then be passive. If, after that, he insensibly draws you towards him, then you have no power to break the link. Before I felt interested in either ---- or ----, I was well read in their faults; yet, knowing them, I have been cementing gradually with both. I have an affection for them both, for reasons almost opposite; and to both must I of necessity cling, supported always by the hope, that when a little time, a few years, shall have tried me more fully in their esteem, I may be able to bring them together. That time must come, because they have both hearts; and they will recollect the best parts of each other, when this gust is overblown.³⁵¹

In this important letter, Adams places the emphasis on Keats's nobility of mind and struggle to achieve disinterestedness. He discusses the contents of Keats's letter of 3 February 1818 to Reynolds without printing Keats's actual lines. This is a purposely chosen letter because its contents are in line with what the reviewer of *The Westminster* has been discussing so far. Because the letter is central to the argument here, I quote some of its noteworthy lines:

. . . for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain philosophy engendered in the whims of an egotist [i.e. William Wordsworth]? Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he [i.e. a person like Wordsworth] makes a false coinage and deceives himself. Many a man can travel to the very bourn of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing. . . . we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and, if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 359. The reviewer omits the names of Reynolds and Haydon in the article.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.* 359. *LLLR* i 77 (*Gittings* 53).

pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject.³⁵²

In the same letter Keats goes on to say that imagination and the poet's 'grandeur & merit' should be 'uncontaminated & unobtrusive'. He argues,

I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur and Hunt's merit, but I mean to say we need not be teased with grandeur and merit when we can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets and Robin Hood. Your letter and its sonnets³⁵³ gave me more pleasure than will the Fourth Book of 'Childe Harold,' and the whole of anybody's life and opinions.³⁵⁴

Commenting on the above lines, Adams states that Keats did not espouse the idea of composing moral doctrines into poetry. It little mattered to him that such doctrines were unique or represented absolute truth. Keats did not attempt to separate morality from poetry. Rather, he believed that passion must be the essential quality of poetry.

³⁵² LLLR i 84-5 (*Gittings* 60-1).

³⁵³ Chapter five of Nicholas Roe's *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* entitled 'Songs from the Woods; or, Outlaw Lyrics' is a scholarly approach to the legend of Robin Hood and his reformist principles. It records many erudite studies of the outlaw in its footnotes. Reynolds included two sonnets on Robin Hood entitled 'To a Friend: On Robin Hood' and 'To the same' in a letter of 3 February 1818 to Keats. The sonnets were published in John Hunt's journal the *Yellow Dwarf*, 21 February 1818 and subsequently in Reynolds's collection *The Garden of Florence and Other Poems* (1821). Roe prints them both on pages 147 and 148 of his book. In reply to Reynolds's sonnets, Keats wrote two sonnets entitled 'Robin Hood: To A Friend' and 'Lines on the Mermaid Tavern'. Roe remarks that the Sherwood pastoral represented the values of happy life and the idyllic greenwood stood for truth, love, freedom and justice. In Keats's time, as lines 38-48 of 'Robin Hood: To A Friend' shows, the harsh world of capitalism and commercial exploitation replace the traditional English liberties. See *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* 134-159; Barnard remarks that by 'old Poets' Keats has the Elizabethan poets in mind and that a lost letter of Keats recorded that he wrote the poem 'Lines on the Mermaid Tavern' after 'visiting the Mermaid Tavern, Cheapside, the famous meeting place of Elizabethan wits and writers, including Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher;' see *Barnard* 223-226 and 615. Schwartz remarks that Reynolds includes three Robin Hood poems – and not two – to Keats in his *The Garden of Florence* (1821). See *Schwartz* 325.

³⁵⁴ LLLR i 85 (*Gittings* 61).

Songs must render passion and the poet must be too submerged in the idea of beauty to be aware of either pleasing the reader or instructing him. Nonetheless, a great poet is heedless of his audience, but his words must contain morality in a grand general sense and his teachings wisdom. From *Endymion* to Keats's last poems one can notice many wise words. Keats objected to the idea that a man should use his skill in poetry as an art to express in verse 'logical conclusions of his intellect on moral questions,' (362). He acknowledged Wordsworth's grandeur in the above letter but thought that they sought different purposes in writing poetry, because they had different perceptions as to what constituted the essential nature of art. To Adams, Keats had a higher perception of art than Wordsworth. Whoever reads his poetry feels that Keats is walking on holy ground carrying his shoes close to his side, to avoid earthly taint. The poet lived in the presence of beauty which comprised his ideal in every thing he saw.

Keats's letter of 19 February 1818 to Reynolds is printed almost in full. The contents of this letter are closely in line with the 'O for a life of sensations' letter because both speak of the empyreal reflection of imagination in relation to human life.

Keats observes,

When man has arrived at a certain ripeness of intellect, any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting-post towards all "the two-and-thirty palaces."³⁵⁵ How happy is such a voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence! A doze upon a sofa does not hinder it, and a nap upon clover engenders ethereal finger-pointings; the prattle of a child gives it wings, and the converse of middle-age a strength to beat

³⁵⁵ Gittings suggests that this is of Buddhist doctrine; *Gittings* 65, n.18. Rollings remarks that Keats was not familiar with Buddhism or the medieval Indian story-book, *Vikrama's Adventures*, in which thirty-two stories about King Vikrama are told by the thirty-two statuettes that supported his throne; *Rollins* i 231, n.2.

them; a strain of music conducts to “an odd angle of the Isle,”³⁵⁶ and when the leaves whisper, it puts a girdle round the earth.³⁵⁷

In is in the same letter that Keats repeats his view of the need to avoid filling poetry with dogma and moral tenets. He goes on to say that ‘man should not dispute or assert, but whisper results to his neighbour,’ and reminding the reader of the ‘Negative Capability’ letter, he asserts, ‘. . . let us open our leaves like a flower, and be passive and receptive, budding patiently under the eye of Apollo, and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit.’ It is indeed in this letter that Keats enters into a conversation with the beauties of the nature around him. He says that the beauty of the morning has given him ‘a sense of idleness’ reminding us of the context in which ‘Ode on Indolence’ came into existence. The thrush in the morning seems to say:

O thou! Whose face hath felt the Winter’s wind,
 Whose eye hath seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,
 And the black elm-tops among the freezing stars:
 To thee the spring will be a harvest-time.
³⁵⁸

The reviewer states that, in the above letter, the poet thinks that meditation and passivity are as important as, if not more so than, action (362). He goes on to say that it is difficult to see what Keats means by thought or action and prefers to leave that judgment to readers. Suppose Keats was a ‘fine being’ – that he certainly was – how can one predict his acts? And suppose he was constantly haunted by modes of heroic thought, of what nature would his words be? Even if one assumes that there is a cause

³⁵⁶ *The Tempest* I.ii.223.

³⁵⁷ The phrase ‘puts a girdle round the earth’ is from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* II.i.175; ‘I’ll put a girdle round about the earth’. Quoted in *The Westminster* 362-3. *LLLR* i 87-8 (*Gittings* 65). The next quotations are from the same source.

³⁵⁸ Quoted in *The Westminster* 363-4. *LLLR* i 90 (*Gittings* 67).

and effect relationship between the two, it is not wise to praise one of them at the expense of the other.

Keats's letter of 24 April 1818 to Taylor clearly explains his conscious awareness as to his progress and development in composing poetry. Adams is of the opinion that the letter indicates Keats's 'great hope for the future' as he devoted his powers to composing mature poetry and was eager to see the results which he expected to follow. This was the time when Keats was preparing *Endymion* for the press:

I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge. . . . there is but one way for me [to do some good to the world]. The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it; and, for that end, purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious, and a love for philosophy; were I calculated for the former I should be glad. But as I am not, I shall turn all my soul to the latter.³⁵⁹

Part of Keats's letter of 8 October 1818 to J. A. Hessey is quoted in the article to show that Keats was not as Byron claimed killed off by an article in the *Quarterly Review*. Adams notes that the letter appeared eleven days after the Croker's attack on *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*. He maintains that the repercussions of the attack are too well known to need further elaboration. But here comes Keats remarking that praise or blame does not have a lasting effect on him because the 'love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works' and his own criticism of his works gives him pain beyond what *Blackwood's* or the *Quarterly* could inflict.³⁶⁰

The reviewer prints a substantial part of Keats's letter of 14-31 October 1818 to his family in America and remarks that the letters of Keats which were written around

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 364. *LLLR* i 129-130 (*Gittings* 88).

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 365. *LLLR* i 214 (*Gittings* 155-156).

the time of Tom Keats's death, and were addressed to his family and friends, are full of interest. They are evidence of genuine warm social affections in the poet and often bring up questions of significant interest, because they offer subtle and wise speculations. They uncover some mysteries in Keats's life and make us feel how far we are from much that we seem to know. The reader finds that he loves to read Keats's letters more and more and listen to what he says as the poet reveals his humble spirit in them, trusts to the power of beauty, and is worshipful before the Infinite. Milnes's biography certainly teaches us these lessons about Keats but the following extract specifically touches on Keats's views on marriage and life:

. . . I hope I shall never marry . . . my solitude is sublime—for, instead of what I have described, there is a sublimity to welcome me home; the roaring of the wind is my wife; and the stars through my window-pane are my children; the mighty abstract Idea of Beauty in all things I have, stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. An amiable wife and sweet children I contemplate as part of that Beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart. I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone, than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my spirit the office which is equivalent to a King's Bodyguard. . . . those things combined with the opinion I have formed of the generality of women, who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar-plum than my time, form a barrier against matrimony which I rejoice in. . . . the only thing that can ever effect me personally for more than one short passing day, is any doubt about my powers for poetry. I seldom have any; and I look with hope to the nighing time when I shall have none. . . . the yearning passion I have for the Beautiful, [is] connected and made one with the ambition of my intellect. . . . some think me middling, others silly, others foolish: every one thinks he sees my weak side against my will, when, in truth, it is with my will. I am content to be thought all this, because I have in my own breast so great a resource.³⁶¹

It is indeed in the same letter that Keats claims that the attempts to crush him in the *Quarterly* have only brought him into public notice and will earn him some respect. He

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* 366-7. *LLR* i 236-7 (*Gittings* 170-171).

goes on to say, 'I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death.'³⁶² Invoking the argument of *Adonais*, Adams maintains that Keats is no longer dead because he is a 'noble presence in the world's Elysium, and pain has no part in him.'³⁶³ Keats's sonnet to Chatterton implies the permanency of soul of the poet now dead and gone:

Oh! How high
 Was night to thy fair morning. Thou didst die
 A half-blown flowret [*sic*], which cold blasts amate.
 But this is past: thou art among the stars
 Of highest heaven: to the rolling spheres
 Thou sweetly singest.³⁶⁴

Adams concludes that Keats's life and letters single him out from his fellow-men and give him his rightful place among 'the inheritors of unfulfilled renown'. The reader is advised to read the biography of Keats for himself to observe the poet's genius. Milnes's biography has been written in such a way that it will not wound the feelings of Keats's friends and foes but give a true, full and particular picture of his character (370-371).

All but the reviewers of the *Dublin Review*, 25 (1848) and *Eclectic Magazine* (July 1848) remark that Milnes's biography is successful in convincing contemporary readers that the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* were not responsible for Keats's death because he died of a disease that was already in his family. Keats's life and letters show that apart from the harsh reviews of his poetry, poverty and love are the two other factors that may have hastened his death. Except for the *Eclectic Review* (1848), all the reviews stress that there was a moral purpose in Keats's writings

³⁶² *LLR* i 227 (*Gittings* 161). The reviewer of *The Westminster* does not record this important part of the letter.

³⁶³ *The Westminster* 368.

³⁶⁴ Quoted in *The Westminster* 368. See *Barnard* 40-41.

though not a didactic one. The letters provide us with a profile of Keats's character and emphasise his morality. They illustrate Keats's personality and thought and his relationship with others: his generosity had attracted the attention of his friends but he was manly and courageous when fighting injustice.

The reviewers recognise that for the first time important documents for the understanding of Keats are made public. They are major explanations for our comprehension of Keats's poems with which they have close affinities. The letters can explain Keats's mood, whereabouts or other circumstances at the time of the composition of many poems. The letters have artistic value of their own. They are full of subtle thoughts and poetic imagery which were poured out spontaneously and inadvertently. Some of his poems like 'Old Meg she was a gipsy', 'On Visiting the Tomb of Burns', 'To Autumn', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 'On Fame', and 'When I have fears that I May Cease to Be' actually appear in the text of the letters in which Keats lays the background for their composition and the foundation for reading them.

All but the reviewer of the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1848) think that Keats's sentimentalism was not a means of expressing anti-social, Jacobin and also immoral views. On the contrary, he is thought to be a worshipper of nature with pantheistic inclinations. The letters show that Keats's sensuous and sensual engagements were the result of his ardent search for ideal beauty and that search entailed a holy quest. He devoted his soul to poetry in which he found solace and looked for the eternal and the beautiful. The development of Keats's poetry occurs side by side with that of his letters. The early life of sensation exhibited in his early letters gives way to a life tinged with thought and philosophy as Keats foreshadows his death. Likewise the elements of death and decay and the notion of the transience of life and its pleasures vis-

à-vis the permanence of art are more apparent in his later poetry. Keats's later poetry also benefits from a more controlled diction. Also, for the first time, and following Keats's own lead, the reviewers compare Keats and Shakespeare together and state that Keats possessed Shakespeare's dramatic powers though to a lesser degree.

CHAPTER 3

FORMAN'S *LETTERS OF JOHN KEATS TO FANNY* (1878)

I

THE HISTORY OF THE OWNERSHIP AND PUBLICATION OF THE LOVE-LETTERS

After Keats's death, some of his friends felt a degree of guilt that they had not been able to save his life or had not done more to alleviate his pain and suffering.³⁶⁵ But then some considered that nothing effective could have been done because Keats's illness was exacerbated by the fact that he was deeply in love. Furthermore, many of Keats's friends had never approved of Fanny Brawne's social standing or believed that she was the right match for the poet during his lifetime. They had, in consequence, no intention of consulting her in relation to their activities in gathering materials for a biography of the poet. It would appear that Keats's friends' guilt led them to look for a scapegoat, and to attach blame to Fanny Brawne. J. H. Reynolds's sisters in particular were hostile to Fanny and this influenced Reynolds's mind to such an extent that in a letter of September 1820 to Taylor he wrote, 'absence from the poor idle Thing of woman-kind, to whom he has so unaccountably attached himself, will not be an ill thing.'³⁶⁶ It was Reynolds's sisters' ridicule of Fanny that made Keats break from the sisters.³⁶⁷ George Keats, Charles and Maria Dilke, Joseph Severn, and even Charles Brown did not endorse Keats's engagement to her. Keats was well aware of this, as in a

³⁶⁵ *Bate* 421.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 421.

³⁶⁷ Jennifer Wallace, introduction to Thomas Medwin, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (1847) in *Lives of the Great Romantics II Volume I* 83.

letter of June (?) 1820 he wrote to her, 'My friends laugh at you! I know some of them – when I know them all I shall never think of them again as friends or even acquaintance.'³⁶⁸ The opinions of Keats's friends had a strong influence on Fanny's reputation after Keats's death, though they had not much influenced the feelings of Keats himself. Hunt did not mention her name or her relationship with Keats in his chapter on Keats in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828). Fanny was, however, the focus of attention and a source of information for some early Victorian authors such as Charles Brown, who wanted to prepare a biography of Keats, or, as we shall see, Thomas Medwin who, in his 1847 biography of Shelley, gave some vital information about Keats's character based on his correspondence with her in the 1840s. In 1829, Brown thought the time was ripe to resuscitate his interest in writing a life of Keats. He asked Fanny in a letter of 17 December of that year if he could refer to her in his biography without citing her actual name. Fanny, who was at the time suffering from the recent death of both her brother and mother, agreed but replied in a letter of 29 December 1829, 'I fear the kindest act would be to let him [Keats] rest for ever in the obscurity to which unhappy circumstances have condemned him.'³⁶⁹ It may have been years of cold reception by the Keats circle that stirred in Fanny a desire to have her say, to cooperate with Brown and provide him with materials for the life he was preparing on Keats. As matters turned out, Fanny was one of Brown's most important informants who together with Brown contributed to puncture the myth that Keats was a genius poet nipped in the bud, being a sensitive soul killed by savage reviewers.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ *LJKFB* 99 (*Gittings* 378).

³⁶⁹ *MBF* lxiii.

³⁷⁰ Brown's letter is in *MBF* lxi-lxii.

Gradually and piecemeal, genuine information and various suggestions about Keats's relationship with Fanny came to light. In 1837, G. C. Cunningham's *Lives of Great Englishmen* was published; it included Keats and indicated 'some perplexities of a nature too delicate, though unfounded, to be mentioned here'.³⁷¹ In 1843, the *Life of Gerald Griffin* included his reminiscences of the Brawnes at Wentworth Place.³⁷² In 1844, in his *Imagination and Fancy*, Hunt stated that Keats was 'as much in love with his heroine [in *St Agnes' Eve*] as his hero is He, doubtless, wrote as he felt, for he was also deeply in love'.³⁷³ In 1845, Severn asked Milnes to write about the real cause behind Keats's death, saying, 'I mean the poor fellows anguish at the first symptoms of consumption when he was about to be married to a most lovely & accomplished girl, which anguish never ceased . . . This Lady was a Miss Brawn [*sic*], she was possessed of considerable property in addition to her beauty & youth and was devotedly attached to Keats & his fame'.

In *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1847), Thomas Medwin devotes some pages to the discussion of Keats's relation to Shelley and the final episodes of his life both in London and Rome. Medwin did not know Keats intimately and his book is principally a biography of Shelley.³⁷⁴ He does not make use of Brown's or Hunt's

³⁷¹ Quoted in Joanna Richardson, *The Everlasting Spell: A Study of Keats and his Friends* (London: Cape, 1963), 159, from G. G. Cunningham, ed., *Lives of Eminent and Illustrious Englishmen, from Alfred the Great to the latest times*, 8 vols (Glasgow & Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co., 1834-37). The next two quotations are from the same page. Hereafter *The Everlasting Spell*.

³⁷² Cited in *The Everlasting Spell* 159.

³⁷³ *Ibid.* 159, from Leigh Hunt, *Imagination and fancy; or Selections from the English poets illustrative of those first requisites of their art; with markings of the best passages, critical notices of the writers, and an essay in answer to the question "What is poetry"?* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1844). The next quotation is also from the same page.

memoirs of the poet. He probably did not have access to Brown's 'Life of Keats' as the latter had given it to Monckton Milnes in 1841. But Medwin had corresponded with Fanny Brawne and made use of her positive accounts of certain aspects of Keats's life. His book is among the earliest recorded documents that speak of the existence of a passionate relationship between Keats and Fanny. Mary Shelley's edition of Shelley's *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* (1840) contained in a footnote Colonel Finch's letter to Shelley claiming that Keats's 'passions were always violent, and his sensibility most keen' to such an extent that he 'might be judged insane' in the closing days of his life.³⁷⁵ Fanny Brawne, now Mrs Lindon, was shocked by the remarks in Mrs Shelley's edition and by the lack of any reply by Severn to Finch's charges. She told Medwin, whom she met in Heidelberg in the 1840s, that the account was not true: 'however great [Keats's] mortification might have been, he was not, I should say, of a character likely to have displayed it in the manner mentioned in Mrs. Shelley's Remains of her husband.'³⁷⁶ Her remarks leave the impression that Fanny was pleased to give Medwin any information he was in need of concerning Keats's life and character. In 1847, Medwin gave an acceptable likeness of Keats saying that he got his information from a lady who was 'a most authentic source'.

³⁷⁴ The biography featured the second short account of Keats's life – after Hunt's chapter on Keats – to be published in the first part of the nineteenth century. It had little impact on public opinion about Keats and contributed little to Keats's reputation. The book never saw a second edition and was soon forgotten as a source of information on Keats because the limited information that it contained was replaced a year later by Milnes's *LLLR* which, as we have seen, was widely reviewed. Medwin printed, for the first time, parts of Keats's letter of 24 (?) October 1820 to Mrs Samuel Brawne. He thought it was the only letter Keats wrote from Italy. See Thomas Medwin, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1847), ii 95-96. Hereafter Medwin, *Life of Shelley*. Milnes did not print the letter in *LLLR* probably because the manuscript of the letter was in Fanny Brawne's possession. *Gittings* 395.

³⁷⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, edited by Mrs Shelley, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), ii 295. Hereafter *Essays from Abroad*.

³⁷⁶ Quoted in Medwin, *Life of Shelley* ii 86. The next quotation is from the same page.

As regards Keats's morbidity of temperament, Fanny wrote to Medwin that she never saw '... anything in [Keats's] manner to give the idea that he was brooding over any secret grief or disappointment. His conversation was in the highest degree interesting, and his spirits good'³⁷⁷ Jennifer Wallace justly states that Medwin's Fanny is a 'rational, clear-sighted and sympathetic woman, with a warm but understated memory of Keats.'³⁷⁸ Fanny's positive view of Keats indicates the impression that the poet left on her; that is to say, the two understood each other well as far as ordinary matters of life were concerned. Certainly Medwin tries to portray Fanny as a caring and compassionate woman.³⁷⁹ Throughout his study, he leaves the identity of his lady informant anonymous. He states that the 'lady . . . better even than Leigh Hunt, knew Keats, with the means of supplying many interesting particulars respecting him.'³⁸⁰ Milnes also omitted Fanny's name in his 1848 biography as well as confusing her with the East-Indian lady Jane Cox, a cousin of Keats's friend Reynolds, to whom Keats was attracted for a short while before he met Fanny Brawne. He wrote that Keats had been

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* ii 90.

³⁷⁸ *Lives of the Great Romantics II Volume I* 83.

³⁷⁹ In his 1887 biography of Keats, Colvin stated that Fanny was 'certainly high-spirited, inexperienced, and self-confident' but 'she did not fully realise what manner of man' Keats was. All his friends were of the opinion that Fanny was 'no mate for him either in heart or mind'. Sidney Colvin, *Keats* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1887), 131-32. Hereafter *Colvin*. Colvin had consulted Medwin's book concerning Fanny's character. He evidently did not fully agree with Medwin's complacent approach towards her.

³⁸⁰ Quoted in Medwin, *Life of Shelley* i 295. Medwin asserts that Brown's Keatsiana were lost in New Zealand after his death there. In his edition of Medwin's *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 177, Harry Buxton Forman states that Brown's *Life of John Keats* was not lost as it was handed over to Milnes by Brown himself in 1841. Forman supplies numerous passages to the original text of Medwin's book.

inspired for his love 'with the passion that only ceased with his existence'. Of this passion he remarked:

The strong power conquered the physical man, and made the very intensity of his passion, in a certain sense, accessory to his death: he might have lived longer if he had loved less. But this should be no matter of self-reproach to the object of his love, for the same may be said of the very exercise of the poetic faculty, and of all that made him what he was. It is enough that she has preserved his memory with a sacred honour, and it is no vain assumption, that to have inspired and sustained the one passion of this noble being has been a source of grave delight and earnest thankfulness, through the changes and changes [*sic*] of her earthly pilgrimage.³⁸¹

Milnes did not print or quote from any of the poet's letters to Fanny in his biography, because he believed that it was 'indecorous' to touch upon and analyse such private sentiments when the object of Keats's love or her near relations were still alive. The reviewers of Milnes's book note that the poet had an unfulfilled passion which probably hastened his death, but they were not able to identify the poet's mistress. James Russell Lowell wrote in his 1854 American edition of Milnes's book:

She [Keats's mistress] seems to have been still living in 1848, and as Mr Milnes tells us, kept the memory of the poet sacred. 'She is an East Indian,' Keats says, 'and ought to be her grandfather's heir.' Her name we do not know.³⁸²

Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke (1843-1911), the grandson of Keats's friend Charles Wentworth Dilke (1789-1864), is a major figure as far as the history of the love-letters of Keats are concerned. A brief biography of him in relation to Keats scholarship is appropriate here. Like Richard Monckton Milnes, he had an elevated social and political position among the most influential men of England. He had toured

³⁸¹ *LLLR* i 242-4.

³⁸² Quoted in *The Everlasting Spell* 162 from James Russell Lowell, ed. *The Poetical Works of John Keats, with a life* (Boston [Mass.]: Little, Brown & Co., 1854).

various British colonies (Australia, India, and Canada) and America in 1866-67, and when he returned to England he wrote an account of his travels in the book *Greater Britain*, which was a success.³⁸³ Disraeli thought of him as the most powerful member of the Liberal party.³⁸⁴ The Dilke family had long been involved in matters related to Keats's life and his family. Keats's friend Dilke had successfully pressed Richard Abbey – Fanny Keats's guardian – for her inheritance in 1824.³⁸⁵ In a letter to Sir Charles, Fanny Llanos asked if he could secure her a Civil List pension. At the time, the Liberals were not in power and therefore Sir Charles asked Fanny Llanos to approach Lord Houghton instead. However, *The Athenaeum*, under the editorship of Sir Charles, did raise the matter, writing that the Prime Minister should grant a pension to the sister of the great poet whose fame was securely established. Sir Charles had inherited his financial security from his grandfather. He was the editor of both *The Athenaeum* and *Notes and Queries* and these positions increased his influence and his income. He was therefore able to buy manuscripts and relics relating to Keats, including some letters and the poet's annotated Shakespeare, in late 1872 from Margaret and Herbert Lindon and the Severns who were pressed for money. Among the letters he acquired were Keats's love letters to Fanny; on the face of it he bought them to prevent their publication but in fact he was interested in publishing them himself. If Wentworth Place – built by Dilke's money and also by Brown's – provided accommodation for the

³⁸³ Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain: A record of travel in English-speaking countries during 1866 and 1867*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1868). In the book, he remarks that the English are a supreme master race that are doing good to the world. *The Everlasting Spell* 171.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 171.

³⁸⁵ Marie Adami, *Fanny Keats* (London: John Murray, 1937), 117. Hereafter *Fanny Keats*.

poet, and if Dilke was influential and instrumental in solving the monetary problems of the Keats family, his grandson made some contribution to the poet's posthumous life.³⁸⁶

The Dilke family served as the 'Victorian storehouse' of information about Fanny Brawne.³⁸⁷ The family was partly responsible for the unfavourable portrayal of Fanny in the Victorian era, because she was disliked by Keats's friend Dilke who bequeathed his negative attitude towards her to his son and his grandson Sir Charles. Sir Charles may well have looked on Fanny as a flirt or as a person who had failed either to appreciate Keats or to love him. Maybe, like Fanny Llanos, he thought that she should have stayed in perpetual mourning for the poet and never married. He disapproved of her selling Severn's miniature of Keats to Dilke, despite her financial needs. Fanny's seemingly unsympathetic reply to Brown's petition to include a reference to her name in his biography quickly became known in the Keats circle. It further made her the object of dislike. In 1875, old William Dilke, the brother of Keats's friend Charles Wentworth Dilke – told his grand-nephew Sir Charles that Fanny Brawne was 'not a lady with whom a Poet so sensitive as John Keats would be likely to fall in love. Your grandfather would probably say she made the advances without really caring much for him.'³⁸⁸ By 1875, Fanny's reply to Brown had become a famous utterance concerning her attitude towards her fiancé's life.³⁸⁹ Sir Charles took advantage of Fanny's notorious letter to Brown – which he thought had been written to

³⁸⁶ *The Everlasting Spell* 163, 171, and 181. Fanny Lindon (Brawne) died in 1865 and her husband in 1872 so that the ground was prepared for making her name public and publishing Keats's letters to her.

³⁸⁷ *Bate* 422.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 422.

³⁸⁹ *Lives of the Great Romantics II Volume I* 82.

Dilke³⁹⁰ – quoting those parts of it that suited him most in his major contribution to Keats's fame, *The Papers of a Critic*, which appeared in 1875 in two volumes. He wrote on May 31st, 1873 in *The Athenaeum* that Keats died of a simple consumption that had already been in the family, so challenging the myth of the morbidly sensitive poet but now, in 1875, to indict Fanny Brawne further he said that Keats was the victim of an unfulfilled love for a cold, irresponsible, and selfish girl. He remarked,

. . . ten years after his [Keats's] death, when the first memoir was proposed [by Brown], the woman he had loved had so little belief in his poetic reputation, that she wrote to Mr. Dilke, 'The kindest act would be to let him rest for ever in the obscurity to which circumstances have condemned him.'³⁹¹

Until his death in 1911, he never held a positive or sympathetic view of Fanny Brawne. The first volume contains a lengthy memoir of his grandfather and some references to his relationship with Keats. With respect to the published history of Keats's love-letters, he remarks that 'in addition . . . to the letters which appear in Lord Houghton's *Life of Keats*, there are a good many [letters] of a more intimate character still, of and about the poet, from which extracts may be made.'³⁹² He printed, for the first time, not Fanny Brawne's complete name but nearly so: 'Miss Frances B. (Fanny)', and quoted from one love-letter:

Now I have had opportunities of passing nights anxious and awake, I have found other thoughts intrude upon me. 'If I should die,' said I to myself, 'I have left no immortal work behind me; nothing to make my friends proud of my memory, but I have loved the principle of

³⁹⁰ It is likely that Sir Charles was pleased to know rightly or otherwise that Fanny's cold response had been written to his grandfather Dilke, because her connections with Dilke could have strengthened Sir Charles's position to comment on all aspects of Keats life. This would justify his hard-line rhetoric against Fanny.

³⁹¹ Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, *The Papers of a Critic, Selected from the Writings of the Late Charles Wentworth Dilke*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1875), i 11. Hereafter *Papers of a Critic*.

³⁹² *Ibid.* i 2.

beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remembered.³⁹³

In 1875, Sir Charles sent some remarkable extracts from the love-letters to Milnes, now Lord Houghton, whose *LLR* was still regarded as the standard biography of the poet. He sent the extracts in order to change his old views about Keats's moral character. The love-letters revealed Keats's sexual desires and explicit expressions of love for Fanny. This was a matter that had not been dealt with in depth in Milnes's biography. Milnes avoided a discussion of Keats's relationship with Fanny as he thought that it was not right to pry into the private affairs of the poet and lay them open before the public. Until 1875, he had not seen the contents of any of Keats's love-letters. Sir Charles may have wanted to question Milnes's portrayal of Keats as a manly figure because Keats had tears in his eyes or was experiencing emotional pain while writing some of them.³⁹⁴ In 1876, Lord Houghton made the first public mention of Fanny Brawne in his Aldine edition of Keats's poetry. He appears to have made little effort to identify her for he introduced her as 'a Miss Brawn, a lady of East-Indian parentage', still confusing Fanny with Jane Cox. He quoted from at least six love-letters that showed slighting references to Fanny. Houghton states that during the autumn and the early winter of 1819, the poet was concerned with two things: his deteriorating health and his passion for Fanny Brawne. He was worrying about his health because he thought that his physical malady would stop him from marrying Fanny; at other moments, the passion for Fanny held the upper hand so that he did not think that his illness was very important. These two feelings dominated him and barred other ideas from entering his mind. Houghton aptly

³⁹³ Letter of February (?) 1820. *Papers of a Critic* i 10, 34. Sir Charles states that the letter has never been published before. *LJKFB* 57 (*Gittings* 361).

³⁹⁴ *The Everlasting Spell* 164.

refers to the two feelings as ‘the silent influences’ that worked upon his mind.³⁹⁵ Keats thought he was a happy man because ‘. . . she was not a woman to fall in love with a poem, and be given away by a novel.’³⁹⁶ He wants to see Fanny a happy person ‘with pleasure in her eyes, love on her lips, and happiness in her step’ and he wishes that their affections might be a ‘constant delight among lesser pleasures rather than a resource from irritations and cares.’ In other words, Keats wants Fanny’s company to give the greatest pleasure rather than serve as a means of escaping from the routine woes of life. Quoting parts of the letter of 5, 6 August 1819, Houghton remarks, ‘when he [Keats] looks forward to the possible future “he abhors the prospect of settling down in life, which would be no better than a stagnant Lethe;” and will find her nobler amusements than the details of common life—“better be imprudent movables than imprudent [*sic*] fixtures”.’ (xxv) The letter was written in Shanklin on Thursday night and Friday morning. The original passage of the letter reads:

We might spend a pleasant Year at Berne or Zurich—if it should please Venus to hear my ‘Beseech thee to hear us O Goddess’ And if she should hear god forbid we should what people call, *settle*—turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe—a vile crescent, row or building. Better be imprudent moveables [*sic*] than prudent fixtures—³⁹⁷

Keats means to say that it is better to remain in creative motion than to become immobilised because one is married. The excerpt also shows one of Keats’s

³⁹⁵ See MEMOIR prefaced to Lord Houghton. ed., *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1876), xxv. Hereafter *Poetical Works, Aldine Edition*. The last few pages of the memoir concentrate on Keats’s expressions of love and his mental anxiety as well as including samples of his final heart-rending letters to Brown and accounts of his final days by Severn.

³⁹⁶ Letter of 8 July 1819 to Fanny Brawne quoted in *Poetical Works, Aldine Edition* xxv. The next two quotations are from the same source pages xxv-xxvi. Further references to the Houghton’s book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text. The love-letter is in *LJKFB* 10-11 (*Gittings* 267).

³⁹⁷ *LJKFB* 21 (*Gittings* 275).

imaginative preoccupations: 'a stagnant Lethe' recalls 'and Lethe-wards had sunk' of line four of 'Ode to a Nightingale': both instances emphasize a contrast with a state of torpid inactivity, preferring movement, even pain, to that.

On 3 February 1820, Keats suffered his first lung haemorrhage and was confined to bed in Brown's house, Hampstead. Houghton states that when Keats's health improved he wrote the letter of 27 (?) February 1820 to Fanny. Now, 'he could write to her [Fanny] cheerfully enough, and draw comparisons between himself and Rousseau's hero, and wonder 'how their correspondence would look if published by Murray.' (xxviii) In the letter Keats remarks that he has been reading two volumes of Rousseau's fictional letters³⁹⁸ with two ladies called Clara and Julia, who have adopted these names of the two principal female characters in his epistolary novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Keats asks Fanny Brawne:

What would Rousseau have said at seeing our little correspondence!
What would his Ladies have said! I don't care much—I would sooner
have Shakespeare's opinion about the matter.

He prefers the objective opinion of Shakespeare the 'Man of Achievement', to that of the author who deliberately blurs the distinction between fiction and life. The letter obviously shows that Keats worried that he might lose Fanny in the end because he implicitly says to her that he wants her to be loyal to him. In this context he remarks, 'thank God that you are fair and can love me without being Letter-written and sentimentaliz'd into it' and ends the letter with 'Good bye, my love, my dear love, my beauty—love me for ever—',³⁹⁹ As regards the love-letter of March (?) 1820,

³⁹⁸ *Correspondance originale et inédite de J. J. Rousseau avec Mme. Latour de Franqueville et M. du Peyrou*, 2 vols (Paris 1803).

³⁹⁹ LJKFB 77 (*Gittings* 362-3).

Houghton states that ‘. . . he [Keats] can repose on her, and her alone, in complete and disinterested enjoyment’ (xxvi). Some of these words are in fact Keats’s and should have been put in quotation marks. Here Houghton follows the same editorial practice that he applied in his *LLR*. He paraphrases Keats’s remarks and therefore leaves the reader uncertain if what he is saying is his own utterance or that of Keats. He changes Keats’s ‘My mind has been the most discontented and restless one that ever was put into a body too small for it. I never felt my Mind repose upon anything with complete and undistracted enjoyment—upon no person but you’⁴⁰⁰ to ‘that he has the most discontented and restless mind ever placed in a body too small for it; (xxvi)’ and, Keats’s ‘When you are in the room my thoughts never fly out of window: you always concentrate my whole senses’ to ‘when she is there his senses are concentrated, and his thoughts never fly out of the window.’ (xxvi) The contents of the letter of June (?) 1820 indicate that Fanny has been sad because of Keats’s unkind words, thoughts, and deeds and that Keats is trying to apologise, saying that he had no intention of uttering words that would make her unhappy. He lives between fear and hope: fear that Fanny may become disloyal, hope that he can be her permanent lover and possessor. Houghton’s saying that Keats was left in an alternation between ‘happy misery or miserable misery’ (xxviii) is taken from the poet’s utterance: ‘If I get on the pleasant clue I live in a sort of happy misery, if on the unpleasant ’tis miserable misery.’⁴⁰¹

The last love-letter quoted from by Houghton is that of August (?) 1820 and is also the last known love-letter Keats wrote. It was written from Hunt’s house in Kentish town, in what was very far from a happy period in his life. In the letter, Keats

⁴⁰⁰ *LJKFB* 69 (*Gittings* 367).

⁴⁰¹ *LJKFB* 98-99 (*Gittings* 378).

expresses his most anxious thoughts and his most strained feelings. He has become intolerant of Fanny's friends whom he refers to as 'new colonists' on an island they have occupied who are led by 'backbitings and jealousies'. Keats here vacillates no more between fear and hope; he has lost hope in Fanny as he indulged the thought that it was not in the stars that he should be with her. There are no existing letters of Fanny Brawne to Keats, which would enable us to know what opinions she expressed and how she reacted towards Keats's passionate sexual inclinations and frantic despair. In the letter of August (?) 1820, Keats once again wants Fanny to alter some cold utterances, which she had expressed in one of her letters to him. Houghton remarks that the more Fanny attended him at this time, the more Keats's agony increased, because he knew that he was certain to lose her and therefore her attendance added salt to his wound. Houghton remarks,

. . . gloom predominated, sometimes leading him into the most foolish jealousy even of his best friends, without whom he said 'he would now be penniless,' and into anger that she should take any part in 'the brute world which he would never see again,' feeling towards her 'as Hamlet to Ophelia.' (xxviii)

As was his consistent practice in other matters, the editor has here softened and rationalised Keats's jealousy, bitter feelings and violent animosity. Houghton, as usual, presents a mollified version of the language and sentiments contained in the letters, which gave only a suggestion of the powerful and candid feelings expressed in them. The lines have been taken from Keats's letter in which the poet's exact words are:

Shakespeare always sums up matters in the most sovereign manner. Hamlet's heart was full of such Misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia "Go to a Nunnery, go, go!" . . . I am sickened at the brute world which you are smiling with. I hate men and women more. I see nothing

but thorns for the future—wherever I may be next winter in Italy or nowhere Brown will be living near you with his indecencies . . .⁴⁰²

Despite Sir Charles's negative propaganda against her, there is no evidence that the revelation of Fanny's name, 28 years after Milnes's biography first appeared and 11 years after her death, caused a shock or attracted hostile criticism of her character.⁴⁰³ Herbert Lindon still owned the copyright of the letters so that Sir Charles did not have the right to print them. He had broken his agreement not to do so and because he quoted from one letter it was possible that he would publish the rest in the future in his own name and out of rivalry with Harry Buxton Forman who had shown interest in them. By the end of the year 1876, Herbert Lindon had asked him to return the letters and Sir Charles had returned all but two of them. On December 29th, 1876, Herbert offered to sell the rest to Lord Houghton. When the offer was refused he showed them to Harry Buxton Forman.⁴⁰⁴ Forman bought both the MSS and the right to print them. It seems quite possible that it was Forman who had urged Herbert to retrieve the letters from Dilke because, as we shall see, he wanted to publish the love-letters of Keats himself. Forman stood to profit financially from the edition and/or from the subsequent sale of the MSS. Before publication of the letters he sold the MSS to F. S. Ellis, the well-known antiquarian bookseller and publisher and an old friend of his, but he retained the copyright and two letters for himself.⁴⁰⁵

As Harry Buxton Forman played a vital role in enhancing Keats (and Shelley) scholarship at the end of the 19th century, some biographical information, especially

⁴⁰² *LJKFB* 106 (*Gittings* 386).

⁴⁰³ *Lives of the Poet* 60.

⁴⁰⁴ *The Everlasting Spell* 165.

⁴⁰⁵ John Collins, *The Two Forgers: A Biography of Harry Buxton Forman & Thomas James Wise* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), 54. Hereafter *The Two Forgers*.

concerning his literary interests and other professional skills, is appropriate here.⁴⁰⁶

Forman joined the Post Office in 1860, a position difficult to obtain at the time, and served in that institution for nearly fifty years (14-15). As a new employee in the Post Office he did not receive a large salary but, compared to other jobs, he had special advantages: his salary would increase automatically on a regular basis; his job was secure; there was a chance of promotion; money was granted for medical treatment and there was a pension in the end (after working for forty years). These limited resources and this modest professional and financial security is the background against which Forman's very considerable editorial labours were carried out. As a supplementary clerk he received £80 per annum; in 1905 (just before retirement) he had risen to joint second secretary of the Post Office on £1,300 per annum. He retired in 1907 at 65, having served forty-seven years and secured a C.B. and a comfortable pension of two-thirds of his final pay. He had risen higher in the Post Office than any other literary man of his time (17-18). Devoting himself conscientiously and energetically to his job, he believed wholeheartedly in what he was doing, suggesting that others do the same so that they become examples for their colleagues (25-29).

⁴⁰⁶ I have mostly benefited from chapters 1-4 of *The Two Forgers* for the information which appears in this section. The book, informative and original in its kind, rarely provides references for the information it gives or alludes to. Further references to the book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text. I have also consulted the following websites designed solely for Harry Buxton Forman or containing information on him: <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/rbms/forgers/forger4.html> (developed at the University of Toronto Libraries, the website in general gives information on the most famous forgers of the world from the 18th century until the 20th); <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/forgery/wise.htm> (the website has been designed by the University of Delaware Library and contains a list of all important books on Forman and T. J. Wise that exposed their forgery); <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/forman.htm> (produced as the previous one, the site delivers good general information as regards Forman's various interests); and <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/BiblioTech/bt-v3n1.html> (of the Virginia Tech, provides information on the techniques employed by Forman in forging books and the way they were revealed).

An interest in the French Positivist Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in youth left a lasting impact on Forman's intellect. He learned from Comte the necessity of carrying out targeted readings; that is to say, that in order to avoid damage to fruitfulness of intellect one must abstain from miscellaneous reading so that one does not become a jack of all trades, master of none (34-35). His positivist interests led him to spend hours outside Post Office duties, with friends and acquaintances who shared the same sympathies. Forman's edition of the poetical works of Shelley appeared in four volumes in 1876-77 and marked the high point of his editorial achievement. A meticulous and painstaking editor, his editions of Shelley still carry authority and are routinely consulted by students of Shelley's text.

Herbert Lindon and his sister Margaret told Forman what they remembered about their mother; they helped him with identifying and understanding Fanny's characteristics in areas he was doubtful about, generally corroborating the portrait of her that emerges from Keats's letters to her. They also discussed the question of which of the love-letters was appropriate for publication. Fanny Keats Llanos in Madrid and Joseph Severn in Rome also helped as Forman kept up a correspondence with both. Severn was informed by Forman about the developments relating to the preparations for the publication of the love-letters. Fanny Llanos told Forman, in a letter of 25 July 1877, that the East Indian lady that Keats had been impressed by was not Fanny Brawne. Severn's letter of 26 September 1877 to Forman indicates that the latter had thirty-seven of Keats's love letters in his possession. Severn thought that the letters were superior to the poetry and that it would be good for the world to know them as this

would only enhance the poet's reputation.⁴⁰⁷ Forman had decided to publish them knowing that by doing so he might suffer financial loss or open himself to moral censure.⁴⁰⁸ He constantly entertained the idea that by publishing, editing, and making books he would be able to make profits and provide a better life for his three children. In June 1874, he had sent the two elder ones to Margate for the summer with a nurse for three months and this cost him dearly, for example. Texts mattered to him in themselves and he had a keen professional eye for editing them; in this regard he was ahead of his contemporaries because he treated the texts that he edited scrupulously and developed rigorous methods for analysing them.

In a letter to Fanny Keats Llanos Forman acknowledges that he edited Keats's love-letters with full knowledge that the publication might set many people against him and end his editorial career and destroy his rising respectability.⁴⁰⁹ He states that Keats would have been pleased with the publication because he would not have wanted his letters to be left in oblivion. It is clear that a sensitive Keats might never have wished his personal and private feelings to have been made public but he might have raised no objections if printing his letters would have accelerated his entering the realm of the English poets after his death. He would certainly have been embarrassed if he knew that the purposeful publication of the letters would come as another blow to his insecure and fragile position amongst the other writers of his time. Forman, however, justifies his editing the love-letters, remarking that all that had been said about Keats represented

⁴⁰⁷ Richardson states that Severn had never seen the contents of any love-letter before the appearance of *LJKFB*, for in a letter to his sister he wrote that the beauty of the letters was beyond that of the poems and that Forman had told him there had never been anything like them before. *The Everlasting Spell* 166. As we shall see, once the letters were published, Severn read them with pain.

⁴⁰⁸ *The Two Forgers* 52. I shall talk more about Forman's apprehension on pages 185 and footnote 473 of this thesis.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 53.

only half the story and so other dimensions of his character had remained unknown and unexplored. His desire to bring out Keats's love-letters comes at a time when Houghton, the then reputable and respected biographer of the poet, was still alive and his conservative views of Keats's character held sway over any other interpretations. He also knew about the letters but had rejected their publication on the grounds that it was not appropriate to pry into the private affairs of an author. Reading and creative writing were among Houghton's first priorities in life and he was constantly engaged in intellectual and political discussions. Forman's enterprise – a combination of daring self-interest and liberal views – has placed him high in the history of Keats scholarship. Other Keats scholars at the time had failed to appreciate the love letters at their true worth. In publishing the love-letters he introduces revolutionary documents to the public which altered profoundly the understanding of Keats. He had the support of a few important people, such as Joseph Severn, Fanny Keats Llanos, and the Lindons in Keats's inner circle, who gave him the green light to go ahead with writing what was a new chapter in the life of Keats with special reference to Fanny Brawne and publishing the poet's letters to her. I shall discuss that after the publication of the love-letters, for a short interval, Fanny Llanos despised Forman's edition for having laid bare Keats's heartfelt sufferings and pangs of love.

II

SCANDALOUS ENTERPRISE: FORMAN'S *LJKFB*

As we have seen, enough was known from the publication of excerpts, and hints and suggestions, to have created an impression that an interesting and illuminating series of love-letters by Keats existed. The most notorious examples were the passages

from the letters which were quoted by Sir Charles and Houghton in 1875 and 1876 respectively. Forman's edition of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* was published as a slim volume in 1878.⁴¹⁰ The book has a recognisably modern layout that consists of several elements: an epigraph, a monumental and classical title page, a NOTE, a dedication, and a table of contents; it also includes an appendix, an index, and some illustrations. The publisher's NOTE on page vi forestalls any objection to the publication of private letters by assuming Fanny Brawne's own approval and the undoubted approval of her surviving family: 'the lady to whom the . . . letters were addressed did not, towards the end of her life, regard their ultimate publication as unlikely.' The publisher is thus rejecting the view that the publication of the letters may entail any breach of confidence with respect to Fanny Brawne's final wishes. He also acknowledges that 'the owners of these letters reserve to themselves all rights of reproduction and translation.' In 1878, F. S. Ellis, a publisher himself, became the new owner of the letters to Fanny Brawne but he did not purchase the copyright to publish them. Forman must have continued to have access to the manuscripts of the letters because in 1883 he published them in a separate section from the rest of the letters of Keats, in the 4th volume of his Keats's works.⁴¹¹ The 1883 volume contains two additional love-letters. Unlike his 1878 edition, here, where applicable, he gives Keats's idiosyncratic original spellings in the footnotes and compares and contrasts it to what he had amended or printed in the context of the love-letters. Reeves & Turner published the second edition of the love-letters of Keats in 1889, which contained the

⁴¹⁰ Harry Buxton Forman, ed., *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne Written in the Years MDCCCXIX and MDCCCXX and Now Given from the Original Manuscripts with Introduction and Notes* (London: Reeves and Turner, MDCCCLXXVIII). Hereafter *LJKFB*.

⁴¹¹ Harry Buxton Forman, ed., *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats*, 4 vols (London: Reeves and Turner, 1883). Hereafter HBF, *Poetical Works*. Volumes 1 and 2 are poetry and volumes 3 and 4 prose.

two additional love-letters from the 1883 volume.⁴¹² Here Buxton Forman, where applicable, does not give Keats's original spellings in the footnotes. The two love-letters of the 1883 volume are put in their correct place chronologically, whereas in the 1889 volume they are in a separate section entitled ADDITIONAL LETTERS. In the 1889 volume, Forman tries to keep the traditional and sober format of the 1878 volume; however, the publisher's note is missing. Instead, Forman prints a preface to the second edition and adds Fanny Brawne's ESTIMATE OF KEATS (from Medwin's 1847 book) to reinforce his apology for Fanny's character. Forman and his publisher had the support of Herbert (d. 1909) and Margaret (d. 1907) Lindon for the subsequent republication of the letters to their mother.

The epigraph, chosen from Shelley's *Adonais*, replays the by then mythical theme, no longer accepted by serious criticism, of Keats's death at the hands of the reviewers of his early poetry, and is reminiscent of the type of polemical position that was taken up in the history of the reception of Keats from immediately after his death in 1821 to the publication of his first biography by Milnes in 1848, and even occasionally down to the appearance of these love-letters in 1878. Forman deliberately selected the opening lines of the second stanza of *Adonais*:

Where wert thou mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? (10-12)

.....

In his Preface to *Adonais* Shelley laments that the unscrupulous attacks made on Keats's *Endymion* are the work of those 'wretched men [who] know not what they

⁴¹² Harry Buxton Forman, ed., *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1889). Hereafter *LJKFB* (1889).

do'.⁴¹³ 'Mighty Mother' is a reference to Urania (the Muse of astronomy⁴¹⁴, the Heavenly One) who is introduced by name immediately afterwards: 'where was Iorn Urania / When Adonais died?' Shelley has not only changed the name 'Adonis' to 'Adonais' – though the word 'Adonis' may also have been derived from the Semitic title 'Adon' (Lord), thereby giving biblical overtones to the word 'Adonais' – but has also modified the spirit of the Greek legend: Aphrodite's corporeal and erotic love for her lover has been changed into the spiritual and maternal affection of Urania for her dead son Adonais. If we accept the Biblical dimension of the name 'Adonais', we can notice further that the imagery invoked by the passage describing the landing of the 'poisoned shaft on a heart . . . composed of more penetrable stuff'⁴¹⁵ can recall both the darkness that fell at Christ's crucifixion and the piercing of his side by a spear.⁴¹⁶

The interrogative mode of the epigraph is purposeful. In quoting Shelley's question, Forman is continuing the tradition of bewilderment and indignation that marks the grand elegiac tradition. It follows the indicative mode of the first line of the first stanza: 'I weep for Adonais—he is dead!' and the imperative mode of the second, fifth, and sixth lines of the same stanza: 'O, weep for Adonais! . . .', 'And thou, sad Hour, . . . / . . . rouse thy obscure compeers, / And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me / Died Adonais' Peter M. Sacks points out that in elegy the mourner asks questions

⁴¹³ *P and P* 391. This employment of such reverential language deliberately echoes Christ's words on the cross: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' *Luke* 23: 34. Similarly, 'the shaft which flies / In darkness' clearly recalls 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day.' *Psalms* 91: 5.

⁴¹⁴ *P and P* 392, n. 5 .

⁴¹⁵ *P and P* 391. Shelley provides other New Testament allusions in his Preface, all tending to associate Keats's critics with those who persecuted Christ.

⁴¹⁶ *Luke* 23: 44-45; *John* 19: 34. Adonais and Urania, Jesus and Mary of Nazareth, and Keats and his muse are three sides of a triangle. See *The Westminster And Foreign Quarterly Review*, 50 (January 1849), 355 which is discussed on page 125 of this thesis.

in order to give vent to his/her imprisoned feelings and grief. The question is the vehicle of an expression of protest. It does not indicate the ignorance of the mourner and is not aimed at seeking an answer. By addressing the question to another person than himself or to the deceased, Shelley involves the widest possible notional audience. In this way he also disentangles himself from any anger that the question may convey. This method helps the mourner to free himself from the perpetual melancholia that would accompany unresolved grief. The mourner tries himself to avoid being a target of the verbal attacks that are formed in the questions. Guilt is part and parcel of every expression of mourning, and the danger is that it may choke the mourner and drag him into permanent melancholy. Putting questions to others in elegy is an attempt to forestall this eventuality. Sacks remarks:

The so frequent, formulaic *Where were you?* may thus mask the more dangerous *Where was I?* And the repetitive, incantatory nature of so much of this questioning emphasises the possibly exorcistic or expiatory element of the ritual.⁴¹⁷

By asking questions, the mourner demands to know if some agent could have prevented the demise of the dead. In *Adonais*, the protective force is Urania. Although no force could finally have stood against the approach of death, putting forward those questions creates the illusion that at the time of death the protective agent was absent rather than being essentially nonexistent. Generally speaking, such rhetorical interrogations also target man's defenceless position in the face of death and therefore 'Where wert thou?' carries the implicit doubt whether the guardian protector does in

⁴¹⁷ Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 22. Hereafter *The English Elegy*. Further references to this book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

fact exist, and more profoundly whether there is anybody or anything that can save us from death.

Such is the force of the passage that Forman sets before his edition which thus strategically adopts the procedure of the elegy to its own purpose. I would like to investigate further the importance of *Adonais* in view of the position Forman gives it in relation to *LJKFB*. Each of Shelley's diverse mourners exhibits deficient mourning and therefore Shelley is able to criticise them or distance himself from their incomplete grief. Yet, they help move the elegy forward as there is motion in pastoral and in the traditional processional ceremony for the dead (148). The first persona is the Hour who is asked to transfer her grief and sorrow to her colleagues and say that Adonais died with her. Having gone through many scenes of grief, sorrow, and tears, we who have read the elegy know that by the end of the poem Adonais (Keats) is immortalised. Indeed, Shelley, in the second and third lines of the elegy, invites us to shed tears on Adonais. Therefore, when the Hour proclaims that

..... with me
 Died Adonais; till the Future dares
 Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
 An echo and a light unto eternity! (1: 6-9)

she has linked, in a quick move and having omitted the passages of grief, the sudden revelation of Keats's death with his immortalised phase in the concluding stanzas of the poem. Sacks maintains that 'with me / Died Adonais' implies that 'this Hour is past and dead.' With the death of the Hour Adonais died. One may assume the dead Hour is functioning as an inscription on a tombstone and therefore is present and existent. As the Hour is one of Shelley's personas, one may think that here Shelley anticipates his

own death or better say that he is already dead. Sacks suggests that this 'double death' may prevent the process of the immortalisation of Keats's fame and name (148).⁴¹⁸

Sacks claims that Shelley wrote *Adonais* immediately after reading Keats's *Hyperion*. He says that the tone and intentions of Shelley in the first stanza of his elegy bear striking resemblances to and, therefore, show the influence of, Thea's sayings when she attempts to revive the spirits of Saturn in dismay:

'Saturn, look up! – though wherefore, poor old King?
 I have no comfort for thee, no, not one:
 I cannot say, "O wherefore sleepest thou?"
 For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
 Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;

 Saturn, sleep on – O thoughtless, why did I
 Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
 Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
 Saturn, sleep on, while at thy feet I weep!'⁴¹⁹ (52-71)

In the above lines, Thea attempts to remind Saturn of his previously powerful divine position which is now forgotten or denied. She also tries to help him rekindle the majestic and glorious feelings of the past. Likewise, in stanza 4 of his poem, Shelley tries to get Urania to recognise and acknowledge Keats as a poet whose poetry is as great as that of Homer, Dante, and Milton, Urania's deceased sons.⁴²⁰ With the recognition of Keats's poetical merits comes the recognition of Shelley himself as a

⁴¹⁸ Jahan Ramazani is of the opinion that Shelley's poem is a 'self-elegy' and therefore here he has 'ecstatically foreseen his demise.' Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 119. Hereafter *Poetry of Mourning*.

⁴¹⁹ *Barnard* 284-5.

⁴²⁰ See also *A Defence of Poetry* in *P and P* 499.

poet (149-150). In stanza 21, Shelley is companionless in grieving for the death of Keats. He questions the value of life in elevated philosophical terms:

‘Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.’⁴²¹ (184-6)

At the end of stanza 22, Dreams and Echoes and Shelley’s attempts to rouse and persuade his associate mourner Urania into mourning are successful: ‘Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung, / From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.’ (197-198) She ‘swept . . . on her way / Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.’ (206-207) In the death chamber, on seeing the ‘living Might’ of Urania, Death loosens his grip on Adonais, for a moment (217-219), but when Urania expresses motherly distress and assumes feminine weakness to cry twice ‘Leave me not’, the emboldened masculine Death rises, enters the cold body of Adonais to receive Urania’s kiss on the lips of her dead son (220-225). Sacks suggests that Shelley is eventually able to rouse Urania by ‘satanic means’ and she will display ‘extravagantly sexual mourning’ for Adonais. Her advances are rebuked by the ‘father figure Death’ (154). The modern psycho-sexual interpretation of *Adonais* is not foreign to Forman’s conception of the relation between Keats’s love-letters and his poetry. By citing *Adonais* as the epigraph to the edition, he is opening up the elegiac nature of Shelley’s

⁴²¹ *P and P* 397. The lines recall Macbeth’s soliloquy:

Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

text and suggesting its similarity to his own enterprise – in particular the making of a significant connection between poetry, the erotic impulse and death.

The epigraph is charged with political significance also as it recalls the indignation in Byron's line, 'Who < drew the [pen?] > shot the arrow?' in his letter of 30 July 1821 to John Murray, the *Quarterly's* publisher.⁴²² Its placement in the beginning lines of the second stanza of *Adonais* is a prelude to other political views that Shelley would bring into verse in other stanzas on Keats, his friends and critics. Forman meant to continue the impact and influence of the contemporary criticism of Keats's poetry in portraying him as a feminised author and the fact that some writers believed that he was the victim of harsh criticism, into methodical Victorian scholarship on the poet. In stanza 5, Shelley says that after Milton's death there were other poets who achieved minor fame during their lifetime. Yet, there were some other poets such as Chatterton and Keats who were greater than these minor poets but were 'Struck by the envious wrath of man or god' (42) and 'Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime.' (43) Forman could have chosen lines such as 'The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew, / Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,' (47-8) from stanza 6, which give a feminised picture of Keats,⁴²³ or the last three lines of stanza 17 in which Shelley wishes that God's curse fall on Keats's calumniator whom at that time he believed by mistake to be Robert Southey. Forman's epigraph instead reminds the reader of stanza 27 in which *Adonais* (Keats) is portrayed as a gentle child whose style of poetry was not conventional and who did not follow the 'trodden paths' (236) of poetry endorsed by the literary men of his age. Being defenceless and while lacking 'Wisdom the mirrored

⁴²² *Byron's Letters and Journals* viii 163. See footnote 72 and pages 25-26 for my previous discussion of the place of Byron's poem in Keats's fame.

⁴²³ Referring to these lines, Hunt portrayed Keats's morbidity though he stressed that Keats was manly. See his *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* i 408 and 426.

shield, or scorn the spear' (240), he faced the ferocious literary critics of his poetry. In the next stanza, Shelley employs animal imagery such as 'herded wolves' (244), 'obscene ravens' (245) and foul 'vultures' (246) to refer to the malicious critics of Keats and their associates. These 'spoilers' (251) would not have dared to face Byron's wrath once he silenced them by shooting an arrow at them.⁴²⁴ The manliness of Byron and the employment of his powerful arrow in confronting the critics are contrasted to the 'weak hands' (237) of Keats. Forman could have chosen parts of stanzas 36, 37, and 38 which mainly focus on Shelley's attack on the reviewer of Keats's *Endymion*, who is referred to as the 'deaf and viperous murderer' (317), 'The nameless worm' (319), and a person who did feel the magical charm of *Endymion*, but being the only person whose envious breast could not be stopped, he escaped its influence. Stanza 37 is a powerful, sober one as it features Shelley's prescription for the chastisement of Keats's vitriolic critic, whom he addresses directly. In it Shelley is less grief-stricken than resentful. Although Shelley refers to the reviewer as a snake with seasonal venom (330) and a 'noteless blot on a remembered name' (327), he does not wish him dead because he entertains the idea that a guilty conscience needs no accuser. In stanza 38, the purity of Adonais's soul is contrasted with the impurity of his critic. Keats as a pure spirit has emanated from the eternal burning fountain to which he will return. He has a noble origin. On the other hand, the critic who is of base nature ('Dust to the dust!' (338)) will be annihilated as a cold ember in an ignoble, black hearth. By printing the epigraph from *Adonais*, Buxton Forman inevitably reminds his readers of the unfavourable reception of Keats's *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review* (April 1818) and the subsequent mythologizing of Keats as a vulnerable boy who died at the hands of the reviewers. It is part of Forman's

⁴²⁴ In an article published in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1808, Henry Brougham attacked Byron's *Hours of Idleness* (published in June 1807). Byron replied with the poem *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). He thought at the time that Jeffrey was the author of the review.

strategy to revive, many years after Milnes's defence of Keats's manliness, a consciousness of the familiar story of Byron and Shelley's feminised version of Keats's character. This recurrence to an earlier conception of Keats serves Forman's purpose by presenting the poet as a victim of bias and envy, and so acts to forestall further criticism of him – and of his editor, in relation to the controversial volume now before them. Forman predicted that his edition would possibly incur the wrath of those critics that did not recognise Keats as primarily an English Romantic poet but rather as one who actively cooperated with London radicals and liberals of his day such as Leigh Hunt and Shelley. Until the end of the 19th century, there were always some critics who were inclined to attack Keats's personality, parental background, and literary production. In this context, Forman's reminding the reader of Shelley's most macabre exposition of Keats's revilers as 'Dust to the dust!' is replete with meaning, because even if the most sceptical reviewers were to criticise Forman's book, in the end, they would join the throng of the annihilated, and no longer influential, critics of Keats's time. In other words, the epigraph at the beginning of Forman's volume, which reminds the readers of Keats's being supposedly snuffed out by ferocious critics, comes as an antitoxin in the presumably weak body of the love-letters that has the potential to derail Keats from his ever-ascending climb towards permanent fame. The bitter reminder aims to secure Keats's reputation by foreseeing and removing as inappropriate any possible adverse criticism of *LJKFB*. The last stanza of the elegy is particularly important as Keats has by then attained the fulfilment, fame, spirituality, and immortality of which ordinary people are deprived. He is capable of transferring his love and immortality to people who like Shelley have become capable of receiving them:

I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar:
 Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are. (492-495)

The last stanza of the elegy is loaded with sexually charged images and phrases such as: 'breath . . . / Descends on me' (487-8); the poet is 'driven' while the earth and skies 'are riven!' (488-491); he is 'borne darkly, fearfully, afar: / Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven' (492-3); Adonais 'beacons' (495) to him. At least, this is a reading of one dimension of the controversial last stanza.⁴²⁵ The modern view of the erotic nature of *Adonais* as an elegy differs from Forman's estimate of the erotic nature of the letters in his edition; the explicit sexuality of the last stanza anticipates the bare and blatant sexuality of Keats's utterances and images in some of his love-letters. Forman was well aware of this as he endeavours to treat the sexuality of Keats's letters in a guarded way. As a man of his age, he makes a different assessment of the erotic nature of the letters in relation to his conception of Keats the creative artist than would be the case nowadays. I shall deal with Forman's argument in the later pages of the chapter when I discuss his apology for publishing the love-letters, in his introduction to the *LJKFB*.

⁴²⁵ Ramazani remarks that here a heterosexual Shelley emphasises 'the urgency of his self-destructive need' to achieve 'a same-sex interfusion with Keats.' *Poetry of Mourning* 249. On page 268 of his book, he suggests that the line, 'No more let Life divide what Death can join together' (53: 477) shows Shelley's 'suicidal counsel'. And on page 101, he remarks that at the same time that Adonais is decaying, 'The airs and streams renew their joyous tone' (18: 156; 20: 172). Keats's death is the guarantor of his continuous contribution to life and his posthumous existence. Knerr believes that the line, 'The breath whose might I have invoked in song' (55: 487) is 'Shelley's only reference to writing the poem; it recalls the first line of the poem: 'I weep for Adonais.' Knerr's opinion further strengthens the view that Shelley thought of Keats's death as his own. Unlike Ramazani, Knerr believes in an intellectual reunion of Shelley with the realm of the departed intellectuals. *Shelley's Adonais: A Critical Edition* 103-4. Rogers states that the 'breath . . . invoked in song' is the West Wind. See Neville Rogers, ed., *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Selected Poetry* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 454. A short discussion of 'Ode to the West Wind' as regards its relation to *Adonais* will come in the following pages.

The title page of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* features sober and monumental block capitals and roman numerals which proclaim both the authentic original sources on which the volume is based and its scholarly apparatus. These elements give an air of dignity and sobriety to the volume, an important consideration in view of its subject matter. Facing the title page is the picture of Keats on his deathbed sketched by Joseph Severn. Underneath the picture are the following words of Severn himself which he noted on the sketch: 'by Joseph Severn 28 Jany 1821, 3 o'clock mng.'⁴²⁶ The title page and the picture therefore serve the same function as the engraving and likeness on Keats's tombstone. William Sharp argues that

The pathetic sketch . . . with the eyelids closed as they are in mortal weakness, and the hair matted with the dews of coming death—give that touching sense of nearness to the dying poet which so many have felt.⁴²⁷

And it is this mixture of pathos and intimacy that Forman is invoking. In his lifetime, for more than half a century after Keats's death, Severn was remembered not so much on account of his own artistic accomplishments as for his intimate association and connection with Keats.⁴²⁸ He had always been fascinated with Keats's character and genius.⁴²⁹ His first academic contribution to Keats's fame was the publication of his

⁴²⁶ Full phraseology of the picture continues with the following words: 'Drawn to keep me awake – a deadly sweat was on him all this night'. *Motion* plate 70.

⁴²⁷ *Life of Severn* xii.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* vi. Sharp indicates that Severn had 'perfect friendship' for Keats. There are contradictory reports as to the motives behind Severn's wanting to accompany Keats to Italy. Milnes said that it was completely altruistic. See *LLLR* ii 70. B. I. Evans believed that the journey had some advantages for Severn too; he could work for 'the Royal Academy travelling scholarship, his only chance of maintaining himself in his years of training as a painter.' B. I. Evans, *London Mercury*, XXX (August 1934), 337-349.

⁴²⁹ Severn's letter of 19 September 1821 to Charles Brown. See 'Severn and Keats', *The Athenaeum* (Aug. 23, '79), 238. The article was published twenty days after Severn's death in Rome.

article 'On the Vicissitudes of Keats's fame' in the *Atlantic Monthly*, XI (April 1863).⁴³⁰

On the title-page of his *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* (1892) – the first biography of Severn – Sharp prints a vignette-head of Keats and writes underneath: '*Severn's recollection in old age of Keats*', thereby connecting the history of Keats's reception and fame throughout the late Victorian period with Severn's remembrances of, reverences for, and obsessions with the young poet. The portrait, says Sharp, is a reproduction of a late drawing by Severn in his old age. Severn was 'so reverent of the genius and dear fame of his beloved friend' that he was not willing to tell anything beyond the facts round Keats's character.⁴³¹ Not long before his death, he said,

With a truth that was ever inapplicable to Keats, I may say that of all I have done with brush or pen, as artist or man, scarce anything will long outlast me, for writ in water⁴³² indeed are my best deeds as well as my worst failures; yet through my beloved Keats I shall be remembered—in the hearts of all who revere my beloved Keats there will be a corner of loving memory for me.⁴³³

As Severn was the unique witness to Keats's death, his portrait represents a kind of authentic relic of the holy poet. Add to this the resemblances to Christ suggested by Shelley in *Adonais*, and Keats appears at the beginning of Forman's edition as a secular saint of poetry. Forman dedicated his book to Joseph Severn for he alone was the unique authority who had full knowledge of Keats's life from the time he left England in September 1820 until his death on 23 February 1821.⁴³⁴ The dedicatory note gives

⁴³⁰ See footnote 33.

⁴³¹ *Life of Severn* xiii.

⁴³² Following Keats's famous formulation of his own epitaph 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water'.

⁴³³ Quoted in *Life of Severn* vi.

⁴³⁴ *LJKFB* vii.

the editor the opportunity to link Severn to the literary world by printing his name as the person who gave him information on various points concerning Keats's life and death. As an artist, Severn gave a 'solemn portraiture' of Keats to be engraved for the edition of Forman's volume, which was for the first time published in Forman's book. Throughout the dedicatory note, Forman employs the language of religious veneration in relation to Keats that further develops the comparison of the poet with Christ: Severn's watching at Keats's bedside is implicitly compared to Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Rome is referred to as the land towards which Keats had already turned his face when he wrote the last three letters to Fanny Brawne. Keats knew that there would be no return thence. It is as if this land was a sanctified ('hallowed') place because Keats's death happened there. The long introduction to the volume is therefore another attempt in the history of the moralisation of Keats's character that began with Milnes's *LLLR*, which did not include Keats's love-letters. Severn, in this context, is presented as the last living disciple (even an Apostle) of a Christ-like poet.⁴³⁵ Both Keats and Christ knew that their end was approaching; and indeed, reading the love letters will make all Keats-lovers feel the agony of soul that the poet went through. I have sufficiently argued, when analysing the reviews of Milnes's *LLLR*, that once both become available, criticism began to develop arguments that Keats's letters and poems are of a piece. In both the letters and poems, we witness ample and repeated prophecy of his own death. It is worth remembering that Keats dedicated his *Endymion* to Thomas Chatterton, thereby placing his poem under the patronage of the paradigmatic poet doomed by his art to an early death. Andrew

⁴³⁵ The employment of the word 'hallowed' is significant because it presents Keats as saint and martyr. The reader is reminded of Shelley's saying in his PREFACE to *Adonais* that Rome's Protestant Cemetery 'is covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.' It also brings to mind Shelley's saying that the *Quarterly Review* killed 'one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God.' *P and P*, 390-1.

Bennett remarks that 'crucial to the figuration of Keats as Poet is an early death which is presciently inscribed within the poet's life and work – an early death which he *knows about*.'⁴³⁶ Milnes was the first major biographer to notice the proleptic sense of death in Keats's writings. He stated that Keats's life was in his writing, and his poems were the transcripts of his personal feelings.⁴³⁷ He remarked further that 'as men die, so they walk among posterity' (2); Keats's early death, like that of Chatterton, of whom he spoke with 'prescient sympathy', gave him a posthumous 'poetical existence' (2). Indeed, Milnes noticed that the tragic fate of Chatterton which disgraced his age and proved that it was indifferent towards genius, is a subject that frequently appears in Keats's letters and poems.⁴³⁸ Certain lines from Keats's 'To Chatterton' '. . . bear a mournful anticipatory analogy to the close of the beautiful elegy which Shelley hung over another early grave.' (12-13) The poem serves as a short elegy on the death of Chatterton with striking resemblances in imagery and tone to Shelley's *Adonais*. In the fourteen-line sonnet, Keats calls Chatterton 'Dear child of sorrow – son of misery!' (2) whose eyes have been shut by the 'film of death' (3).⁴³⁹ As in *Adonais*, where 'The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew / Died on the promise of the fruit . . . ' (6: 52-53), Chatterton '. . . didst diē / A half-blown flow'ret which cold blasts amate.' (7-8) Keats immortalises Chatterton in the same way that Shelley will have immortalised Keats at the end of *Adonais*. Chatterton is 'among the stars / Of highest Heaven: to the rolling spheres / Thou sweetly singest . . . ' (9-11) In this regard, Bennett remarks,

⁴³⁶ Andrew Bennett, 'Keats's Prescience, His Renown' in *Romanticism* 2.1 (1996): 13. Hereafter 'Keats's Prescience'.

⁴³⁷ *LLLR* i 2. Further references to this source will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

⁴³⁸ John Barnard says, 'for the Romantics he [Chatterton] became a symbol of society's neglect of the artist.' *Barnard* 559.

⁴³⁹ See the poem in *Barnard* 40-41.

. . . Milnes's biography frames Keats in terms of an aesthetics of prescience, in terms of the poet's proleptic articulation of his own death. The after-life of Keats's reputation, that is to say, is regulated by a sense that it has been prophetically inscribed within the poet's life and writing. In this respect, Keats's relationship with Chatterton is fundamental, since it provides the critic and biographer with a way of talking about this recognition by means of the figure of identification.⁴⁴⁰

Bennett argues that an early death for Keats 'works as a redemptive supplement, an alternative to life.' Through his death, he will have the life of a poet. He goes on to say that

. . . the coincidence of Keats's constitutive poetic act of dying with a certain prescience of that death . . . is a fundamental concatenation in the reception of Keats in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in his after-fame.⁴⁴¹

In many poems of Keats, the persona is weak, swooning, fainting, fading, failing, falling and dying. These qualities, considered as faults, prompted some adverse criticism of his poetry and gave the conservative writers of his time, and also poets such as Byron, a pretext to call him by humiliating phrases such as 'Johnny Keats'. I have already discussed on pages 77-78 of this thesis, a review of Milnes's biography in *The British Quarterly Review* 8 (1848), in which the reviewer remarked that prior to the publication of *LLR*, the poet was portrayed as a 'lackadaisical, feeble, consumptive poet, . . . [with] weak lungs . . . [and] the perpetual recurrence of "swoonings" and "faintings" in his poems', which portrayed him 'as the sort of man to give way to all fantastical conceits, . . . to want the very characteristic of greatness—manly sense, and manly strength.' We remember that, having Keats's 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles'⁴⁴² in mind, the reviewer argued that the poet felt 'Like a sick eagle, looking at the sky' (5),

⁴⁴⁰ 'Keats's Prescience' 14.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.* 13.

⁴⁴² In *Barnard* 99-100.

and said that his epitaph must be '*Here lies one whose name was writ in water.*'⁴⁴³ Bennett argues that it is exactly this 'wasted corpus of Keatsian writing [that] is the very condition of the after-life of that corpus.'⁴⁴⁴ This failing body gives Keats immortality and makes his poetry immortal. This is of course how Shelley treats the dead body of Keats in *Adonais*, as the condition of immortalising him in the end.⁴⁴⁵ In both 'Ode to the West Wind' and *Adonais*, Shelley invokes spiritual and immortal beings such as the West Wind – that can destroy the physical mass only to preserve it in an immaterial form – and the soul of Adonais to give life and breath to his revolutionary and idealistic ideas. At the end of both he seeks unity with the essences of the West Wind and soul of Adonais so as to achieve immortality. Because both are unchangeable and spiritual in existence, they can themselves bring about change, and Shelley can bring about the changes that he devises by submitting to an immortal being. This is what is affirmed in stanza 52 of *Adonais*. Matter changes, the immortal spirit, with which the soul of Keats and Shelley will seek unity, remains. In the letters to Fanny Brawne Keats's body is gradually decaying and gradually sinking into death – his lungs, the centre of life and

⁴⁴³ *The British Quarterly Review*, 8 (1848), 328-9 and 332.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Keats's Prescience' 15.

⁴⁴⁵ Some contemporaries of Keats argued that recognition of an author comes only after his death. Wordsworth, in his 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' (1815), remarks that 'depraved' poetry is soon recognised and read by superficial readers who derive immediate understanding from reading it. These 'species' may survive from generation to generation but the individual who wrote them 'perishes' and is soon forgotten. 'Good' and serious poetry has depth and its recognition may be postponed. These 'species' and their authors are remembered from age to age. See Stephen Gill, ed., *William Wordsworth* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 660-661; in his *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), Shelley says that '. . . in modern times, no living poet ever arrived at the fullness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impanelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations.' See *P and P* 486. Hunt states that Keats was 'one of those who are too genuine and too original to be properly appreciated at first, but whose time for applause will infallibly arrive with the many . . .' See *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* i 442.

breath were completely destroyed; but his immaterial presence that is the soul and essence of his letters, remains.

Buxton Forman states that Severn had been a witness to the relationship between John Keats and Fanny Brawne at the time of the correspondence but others who did not see him will love him and believe in him by faith. The love letters are 'varied transcripts of his inner life' and will give us 'better knowledge of his heart', a knowledge that is not unalloyed with pain.⁴⁴⁶ He remarks that it was in the Preface to *Adonais* that Shelley spoke of Severn as a 'virtuous man' who had 'motives' for his 'unwearied attendance' at Keats's death-bed.⁴⁴⁷ Shelley's words are quoted as prophetic of Keats's immortality and his own and that of Severn, because Shelley who immortalises Keats in *Adonais* and joins the realm of the inheritors of unfulfilled renown at the end of the elegy, wishes that Keats's 'unextinguished Spirit . . . plead against Oblivion' for Severn's name.⁴⁴⁸ The fame and myth of *Adonais* will spread the fame and name of Severn.⁴⁴⁹

The silhouette (facing page 3) of Fanny Brawne aged twenty-eight, made sometime between January and June 1829 by the famous French émigré Augustin

⁴⁴⁶ *LJKFB* vii-viii.

⁴⁴⁷ *P and P* 392 and *LJKFB* viii-ix.

⁴⁴⁸ Severn was reinterred in 1881 a little way from Keats's tomb in the Protestant Cemetery, Rome.

⁴⁴⁹ In a letter of 4 October 1824 to Maria Severn he wrote: 'my coming with Keats and friendship for him will be a never fading Laurel. For everyone knows it, as Keats' name is rising and everyone respects my character for it.' And in a letter of 21 November 1825 to Tom Severn he said that Keats's 'friendship and death are so interwoven with my name that it will be ever an honour [to] me.' Quoted in *KC* i cxxxiii.

Edouart, both conceals and reveals her identity as well as presenting her as a sanitised and spiritual presence at the centre of the volume. It depicts a full-length profile:

... there is strong character in her nose and chin, her tall cap adds to her height and to her graceful posture, and, holding a fan, she exemplifies the dress, manner and carriage in which she so firmly believed. Her family considered that the silhouette was characteristic and accurate as far as such things could be.⁴⁵⁰

She was a pretty woman, though not a beautiful one. She had dark brown hair and blue eyes and was as tall as Keats. As she grew older she became more continental than English in appearance as her ambrotype, taken c. 1850 shows.⁴⁵¹

Forman remarks that he found it necessary to explore the ‘one profound passion’ that was among the few important incidents in Keats’s life. Keats’s love-letters increase the reader’s knowledge of the poet’s heart and familiarise him with the ‘vivid and varied transcripts of his inner life during his latter years.’⁴⁵² The letters show the agony the poet felt at heart. They also portray Keats as a lover whose expression of love was not unalloyed with sorrow. The edition, Forman claims embodies the perfect expression of Keats’s passion which has two characteristics: first, it is not ‘too sacred’, which I interpret to mean too private, and secondly, it shows a very sensitive Keats in times of pain and trouble. This is an indirect confirmation by the author that even though, after the appearance of *LLLR*, many came to recognise that Keats did not die of a ferocious critique, he was none the less vulnerable to the lashes of unfavourable circumstances

⁴⁵⁰ Joanna Richardson, *Fanny Brawne: A Biography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1952), 115-117. Hereafter *Fanny Brawne*.

⁴⁵¹ *Motion*, PLATE SECTIONS 58-60.

⁴⁵² Quoted in *LJKFB* viii and xiii. Richard Monckton Milnes, *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (1863 and other dates), ix. Further references to the book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

and that Byron, Shelley, and Hunt's caricatures of a feminised Keats had had a profound effect on Keats's reputation. The three final years of Keats's life show vividly Keats the poet and Keats the man at work. His greatest works appeared at the time he was suffering his greatest sorrows. Buxton Forman and Milnes think differently as regards the quality and maturity of Keats's poetry. The former is of the opinion that with respect to the perfection of poetry, Keats could have never gone beyond what he has produced. There were forces working within the poet in the last three years of his life that made possible

compositions wherein the lover of poetry can discern the supreme hand of a master, the ultimate and sovereign perfection beyond which, in point of quality, the poet could never have gone had he lived a hundred years, whatever he might have done in magnitude and variety. (*LJKFB* xiv-xv)

The love-letters, as 'sacred' documents, are records of a romantic passion which is implicated with the period of Keats's highest and most perfect creative work, and which passion is fatal to him. Alongside the composition of his best poetry, his love for Fanny grew despite the dark background of poverty and sickness. *LJKFB* made known what was thirty years previously too private for Milnes to publish. The letters presented a new Keats to Forman, a Keats that was different from the one he had known before he obtained the letters. They gave him a more transparent picture of the poet's mind. He discovered 'certain mental and moral characteristics' that had hitherto remained hidden to him. It was good for people to know about these variant features that revealed another facet of the poet's personality (xvi-xvii). Here and in many other places in his introduction, Forman takes the lead from Keats's letters to family and friends, which were published in 1848. Evidently, he had in mind Keats's 'I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth.'⁴⁵³ By displaying the affections of Keats's

⁴⁵³ Letter of 22 November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey. *LLLR* i 64 (*Gittings* 36-7).

heart in their most intimate records, he wishes to make a connection between the imaginative and the passionate life of the artist.

It was not easy for Buxton Forman to put the love letters in chronological order, because some of them had been distributed by hand and had no date on them. Out of thirty-seven letters in his possession, only nine bear a postmark, and this is not necessarily the date of composition. Forman was not sure if the chronological order in which he arranged the letters was one hundred percent correct. Letters II and V specify the day of the month and the month itself in which they were written but do not give the year. Keats dates number V a day later than the one actually shown by the postmark.⁴⁵⁴ There is, says Forman, a psychological reason why Keats addressed the letters the way he did: the total neglect of the passage of monotonous time corresponds with his worship of 'perfect beauty' in far and remote objects (xix). In this regard, Fanny was the personification of the perfect beauty in whose image he found refuge. As far as Keats's views of a thing of beauty are concerned, she was the example and hitherto hidden meaning of many of the poet's letters to family and friends, which is revealed only after the letters to her are read. He addressed four of the letters to Mrs Brawne instead of Miss Brawne because he did not want the person who carried the letters or people around him to know whom the letters were meant for. Buxton Forman argues that three of the letters addressed to Mrs Brawne were certainly written at Hunt's house in Kentish Town and the person who got them to Fanny at Hampstead was not the person who usually took Keats's letters over to her when the poet was living next door to his love. The other one was sent from one house to the neighbour - in Hampstead -

⁴⁵⁴ Numbers I to IX are addressed to 'Miss Brawne, Wentworth Place, Hampstead', numbers X-XVII and XIX-XXXII to 'Miss Brawne', numbers XVIII, XXXIII, XXXIV, and XXXVI to 'Mrs. Brawne', and numbers XXXV and XXXVII do not have any addresses printed on them. Please see Appendices IV and V.

but not by the usual letter carrier. The letters were written from various locations: 1) the Isle of Wight and Westminster in the summer and autumn of 1819 (2) Wentworth Place during Keats's illness in the early part of 1820, and (3) Kentish Town, before his departure for Italy in September, 1820 (xx).⁴⁵⁵ Gittings verifies the order of the first group. In the second group, including letters X-XXXII, there is only one misplaced letter, so the chronology is almost fully correct. There is almost no chronology attempted in the arrangement of the last group that contains letters XXXIII-XXXVII, though Buxton Forman puts Keats's last letter to Fanny Brawne in its correct place.⁴⁵⁶

It needed to be brought to readers' attention that the editor of the love-letters was interested to investigate the timing of two events: the date of the passion conceived by Keats for Fanny Brawne⁴⁵⁷; and the time that Keats burst a blood-vessel which began

⁴⁵⁵ When Keats left Hampstead, he did not go directly to live with Hunt. On 4 May 1820 he moved his belongings to 2 Wesleyan Place, Kentish town, near where Hunt lived. Two days later he moved to 2 Wesleyan Place and stayed there till 22 June 1820 when he moved to Hunt's house in Mortimer Terrace, Kentish Town. There is at least one letter dated May (?) 1820, and written possibly on May 30 1820, that was sent from 2 Wesley Place; *Gittings* 375 (*Rollins* ii 290). There is another letter dated conjecturally May (?) 1820 by Gittings and 5 July (?) 1820 by Rollins, printed on pages 376-378 and 303-304 of their editions respectively. Rollins agrees with Maurice Buxton Forman (1931) and argues that the appearance of the line, 'They talk of me going to Italy' suggests a date after the June 22, 1820 haemorrhage and the advice of Dr William Lambe and Dr George Darling; *Rollins* ii 303, n. 1. Gittings, however, takes side with Macgillivray in adopting May (?) 1820 as the most likely date for Keats's letter. He rejects Rollins's argument and says that there had been talk of Keats's going to Italy much earlier in the year. Also several parts of the letter seem to be connected with other parts of some letters that were written well before Keats's haemorrhage; *Macgillivray* xxxv and *Gittings* 403, Appendix, n. 8. If we take Gittings's conjectural date as the actual date of Keats's letter then this is the second letter that was sent from Keats's lodgings in 2 Wesleyan Place.

⁴⁵⁶ See Appendices IV and V.

⁴⁵⁷ Forman says that from the line, 'the very first week I knew you I wrote myself your vassal,' in letter III of the first group, one can inevitably assume that the date of the first meeting was 'between the end of October and the beginning of December, 1818' (xxiv and 13). Gittings and Rollins decline to give their analysis of the line in the letter and do not refer to Buxton Forman's commentary. However, Rollins mentions that possibly shortly after Keats returned to London on 18 August 1818 from his trip to Scotland, he

his gradual decline towards death.⁴⁵⁸ The two events are closely related to each other. Readers who had seen the reviews of Milnes's *LLLR* knew that the writers of some of these reviews made it clear that Keats died not because of the ferocious criticism of his poetry but because he was in love. The pain and pangs of love were too much for him to bear. Some reviewers asserted that the anxieties of love contributed to his demise. So in Keats's case, Buxton Forman makes it clear that the issues of love and death were interconnected and a sound mind can guess the existence of such a relationship (xx-xxi). Moreover, the shortness of life and beauty is versified in many of Keats's poems specially the major Odes just as the permanence of art and object of love in an ideal world is also celebrated in some of the same odes. The love-letters therefore shed a fresh light on the meaning of the poems that speak of the poet's emotions for love, death, and eternity.

Fanny Brawne was not, in Forman's assessment, the first and the only woman Keats was attracted to. He prints the controversial and notorious letter of 29 October 1818 to George Keats and says: let us assume, for a moment, that the lady whom Keats refers to as 'East-Indian' and having a 'rich Eastern look' was indeed Miss Fanny Brawne. He states that Milnes also had the same opinion about the East-Indian lady (xxiv-xxix):⁴⁵⁹ in *LLLR*, Milnes publishes three more letters after the 29th of October

met Fanny Brawne. *Rollins* i 44. Walter Jackson Bate remarks that when Tom's health became worse in November 1818, Keats stopped going into the town and visited only the Dilkes in Hampstead briefly. It was probably on one of these visits that he met Fanny Brawne 'around the middle of November'. *Bate* 420-1

⁴⁵⁸ On page liii of his edition, Forman establishes the date of Keats's coughing up blood, his 'death-warrant' as 3 February 1820; this is an example of his meticulous scholarship.

⁴⁵⁹ Milnes, as quoted by Buxton Forman, indicates in general terms in the memoirs published in 1848 and 1867 and in other works published later on that the lady here described was Fanny Brawne; consult p. 50, n.132. Gittings dates the letter as 14-31 October 1818 written to his family in America; *LLLR* i 228 (*Gittings* 162).

letter. In one of them written to Reynolds, Keats speaks of the charms of a 'lady'⁴⁶⁰. After the three letters comes the line, 'the lady alluded to in the above pages inspired Keats with the passion that only ceased with his existence.' Milnes evidently did not know of the existence of Jane Cox. In the brief memoir prefixed to the 1876 Aldine Edition of *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, Lord Houghton speaks of the notorious passage from the letter of 29 October as descriptive of Miss Brawne (xxix-xxx).⁴⁶¹ In an important reinterpretation, we are given firsthand evidence after the above discussion that the lady referred to in Keats's letter of 14-31 October 1818 to his family was not Fanny Brawne (xxx-xxxiv).⁴⁶² Forman states that from Keats's letter of 18 December 1818 to Woodhouse we understand that he was now ready to turn over a new leaf (xxxv).⁴⁶³ In his letter of 22 (?) September 1818 to Reynolds, Keats states that 'the voice and shape of a woman has haunted me these two days' and '. . . that woman and poetry were ringing changes in my senses' (xxxv-xxxvi).⁴⁶⁴ The editor of the love-letters gives no date to this letter but suggests that it was certainly written before Tom's death because in the letter Keats mentioned that Tom was not well. He argues that the fervid expressions used in the letter refer to 'the real heroine of the poet's tragedy'

⁴⁶⁰ 'I never was in love, yet the voice and shape of a woman has haunted me these two days.' *LLLR* i 240 (*Gittings* 154). Milnes's edition does not assign a date for the letter to Reynolds. Both *Gittings* and *Rollins* give the date as 22 (?) September 1818. Therefore, Keats knew Jane Cox before the composition of his letter to his family in America. *Rollins* identifies the 'woman' as Jane Cox and states that Keats was fascinated by her as late as 14 October 1818, the time when he last talked about her in his journal-letter to his family in America. *Rollins* i 66, n. 5 and 394, n. 6.

⁴⁶¹ Both *Rollins* and *Gittings* prove that she was Jane Cox.

⁴⁶² His internal and external considerations and examinations of the letter convince him that the 'the Misses ----' refer to John Hamilton Reynolds's sisters. He is also aided with information from Severn and Fanny Llanos's supportive letters, in making these decisions.

⁴⁶³ *LLLR* i 239 (*Rollins* i 412).

⁴⁶⁴ *LLLR* i 240 (*Gittings* 154).

(xxxvi) who was Fanny Brawne. The letter of 16 December 1818-4 January 1819 to the George Keatses in America is published with no dates in Milnes's biography of Keats and in Forman's volume and the latter wrongly assumes that it was written before the letter of 22 (?) September 1818 to Reynolds. When Keats wrote the letter, Tom was already dead. Here is the passage about Fanny to which Forman refers in his volume:

Shall I give you Miss ----? She is about my height, with a fine style of countenance of the lengthened sort; she wants sentiment in every feature; she manages to make her hair look well; . . . her shape is very graceful, and so are her movements; her arms are good, her hands bad-ish, her feet tolerable. She is not seventeen, but she is ignorant; (xxxvii-xxxviii)⁴⁶⁵

The editor of the love-letters remarks that 'Miss ----' is a definite reference to Fanny Brawne because he has checked the details of the letter with the members of her family who say that the sentence 'she is not seventeen' must be corrected to she is not '19'. Forman states that it is likelier that the figure '19' may wrongly have been transcribed as '17'; he judges that this may also be a natural mistake made by Keats (xxxix).⁴⁶⁶

Excerpts in the love-letters show Keats's unkind remarks against Fanny Brawne, because of her flirtatious behaviour with Charles Brown⁴⁶⁷, because of Brown's

⁴⁶⁵ *LLR* i 252 (*Gittings* 182-183). Milnes gives the date of the letter as [1818-19.] and excises Fanny Brawne's name.

⁴⁶⁶ Fanny Brawne was 18 in August 1818. The word 'seventeen' exists in the text of the manuscript of the letter to which Rollins had access. Therefore, Keats did actually write the word 'seventeen', though we do not know whether this was because of an unintentional mistake on the part of the poet (because of his hasty hand-writing) or because he did think that Fanny Brawne was not seventeen, at the time. Forman consulted John Jeffrey's transcript of the letter, an abridged version of the original, which was published in 1848. Buxton Forman is making a mistake in asserting that the figure '19' may have been 'mistranscribed' as '17' because neither Keats nor Jeffrey used figures for putting down Fanny's age. *Rollins* i 20-23; ii 4 (n.1), 13.

⁴⁶⁷ 'When you were in the habit of flirting with Brown you would have left off, could your own heart have felt one half of one pang mine did. . . . you have a thousand activities—you can be happy without me. Any party, any thing to fill up the day has

suspicious and indecent approach towards Fanny⁴⁶⁸, because of Keats's sensitiveness and the misfortunes that had befallen the poet earlier. Keats was seriously engaged in matters of art and life, says Forman, and anything that vulgarised or underestimated his passion for love created the most horrible spectacle before his eyes. He was mortified to see his genuine love for Fanny be often profaned by her. In a biased but humorous criticism of Shelley, Forman stated that Keats was not 'in any degree a prophet or propagandist like Shelley' because he was deeper in and more sensitive to matters of love, death, and misfortunes than many 'persons of refinement and culture' (lvii). His apology for Keats's meritorious qualities in art and life is in contrast with Houghton's evaluation of Keats's humane feelings had he lived longer than he did: 'had Keats lived to maturity his claims on the larger sympathies of mankind would have made such a plan superfluous, and the special interest it may command would have been lost in the completeness of his genius and fame.'⁴⁶⁹

Mrs Dilke, the wife of Keats's friend Dilke, had referred to the sensitive Keats-Fanny relationship in 1875: 'he [Keats] don't [*sic*] like anyone to look at her or to speak to her'.⁴⁷⁰ Forman prints an extract of a letter from Miss Reynolds to Mrs Dilke which

been enough. How have you pass'd [*sic*] this month? Who have you smiled with? All this may seem savage in me. You do not feel as I do—you do not know what it is to love—one day you may—your time is not come.' Love-letter of May (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 94-96 (*Gittings* 377).

⁴⁶⁸ '... wherever I may be next winter, in Italy or nowhere, Brown will be living near you with his indecencies.' Love-letter of August (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 106-107 (*Gittings* 386).

⁴⁶⁹ In EDITOR'S NOTE to *Poetical Works, Aldine Edition*. Houghton's edition was reprinted in 1879, 1882, 1883, 1886, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1895. The long-standing biographer of the poet was of the opinion that some poems of Keats were 'worthless compositions' and that he had to insert them into his edition to make it complete. The EDITOR'S NOTE and MEMOIR are left intact in all these later editions.

⁴⁷⁰ *Papers of a Critic* i 11.

appears on the same page of Sir Charles's book: 'I hear that Keats is going to Rome . . . absence may probably weaken, if not break off, a connexion that has been a most unhappy one for him.' (lx) Forman is trying to say that Keats's love-letters best showed Keats's concerns with respect to his relationship with Fanny. Evidently, any other engagement than that with Fanny would not have saved Keats, because after all, for financial reasons, the poet could not live an independent life and ill-health prevented him from trying to stand on his own feet. One cannot assert that Keats died because of his passion for Fanny: that the notion that he died of adverse criticism was finally corrected does not give readers a pretext to think that he died of love (lx-lxi); this was a clear rejection of Sir Charles's assertion that Keats may have died of love – Sir Charles was happy to make this assertion in order to accuse Fanny Brawne of cold behaviour towards Keats. As Forman puts it, the greatest achievement of his book is that it gives the same significance and value to the love-letters as it does to the letters that were published thirty years ago by Milnes. The appearance of love-letters does not undermine Milnes's moralisation of Keats's character. Nonetheless, readers have the right to investigate his lovesick years which were marked by obsessions for better health. That investigation will not change Milnes's positive sketch of Keats's robustness and sound judgment (lxii). Forman's book is a formal critique of other opinions published previously. It is in particular a response to Sir Charles's accusations that Fanny was cold towards Keats because of her reply of 29 December 1829 to Brown, in which she said that 'the kindest act would be to let him rest for ever' (lxiii) Forman dedicates the last four pages of his introduction to a defence of Fanny's character and taste in life and art. He argues that

She had the gift of independence or self-sufficingness in a high degree; and it was not easy to turn her from a settled purpose. . . . she was a voluminous reader in widely varying branches of literature; . . . one of her strong points of learning was the history of costume, in which she was so well read as to be able to answer any question of detail at a moment's notice. . . . she was an eager politician, with very strong

convictions, fiery and animated in discussion; and this characteristic she preserved till the end. (lxv)

The above description does not match the characteristics and qualities of the Fanny Brawne of Keats's time, who was only 19 when Keats's passion for her started to grow and who knew him only for two years. These are positive and confident words hardly spoken by any other author about her. The steady and generous tone of Forman's sentences puts his views in sharp contrast to those of Sir Charles or of Keats himself when he complained of Fanny's possible infidelity.

On page xliii of Forman's *LJKFB* appears a full text of the sonnet 'As Hermes once took to his feathers light,'⁴⁷¹ which he copied from *LLR* ii 302. He states that the interesting thing about the poem is that Keats wrote it in Cary's *Dante*, which he gave to Fanny Brawne. The book is marked throughout for Fanny Brawne's use. Forman remarks that

At one end [of the book] is written the sonnet referred to . . . apparently composed by Keats with the book before him, as there are two 'false starts,' as well as erasures; and at the other end, in the handwriting of Miss Brawne, is copied Keats's last sonnet,

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art (*LJKFB* xliv)

⁴⁷¹ Keats wrote the poem on or before the 16th of April 1819 and copied it in his letter of 14 February – 3 May 1819 to the George Keatses. Milnes removed it from the context of the letter and printed it in the LITERARY REMAINS section of his biography of Keats. Jack Stillinger states that there are nine available MSS of the poem that include a holograph draft written on a blank leaf at the end of Volume I of H. F. Cary's 1814 translation *The Vision; or, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, of Dante Alighieri*, which is now at Yale, the holograph fair copy in Keats's journal letter, the transcripts by Brown, Dilke, Woodhouse (two copies), Hessey, Payne, and Jeffrey (in his copy of the letter). *Stillinger* 326, 635-6. There are minor differences in the texts of the MSS and different transcribers gave the poem different titles. Stillinger considers that the holograph draft in Cary's *Dante* is 'pretty clearly Keats's original draft . . . and there are two fragments in Keats's hand elsewhere in the same volume that are best interpreted as rejected beginnings prior to the writing of the complete draft.' He judges that Keats probably wrote the poem in his letter soon after he wrote it in Cary's *Dante*, though it is not clear whether he wrote the letter copy from the holograph draft in the book or another transcript.

Barnard is of the opinion that the poem is related to Keats's feelings for Fanny Brawne. Lines 11-12: '. . . lovers need not tell / Their sorrows. . . .' indicate Keats's dissatisfaction with his friends' attempts to pry into his private relationship with Fanny – a dissatisfaction that he had often spoken of in his love-letters.⁴⁷² Forman is, therefore, the first editor who refers to Keats's letter of 14 February – 3 May 1819 to his family in America and tries to establish a relationship between the lovers in the sonnet, 'As Hermes . . .' and Keats's erotic feelings for Fanny Brawne, because the poet gave the Cary's Dante in which he wrote the poem, to Fanny Brawne. Keats wrote some of his poems such as 'As Hermes . . .' and 'Bright star! . . .' when he was overwhelmed with passion for Fanny. The emotions exhibited are clearly and freely expressed in his love-letters. Alternatively, the love-letters are the documents that help explain the imagery and connotations employed in some of the poet's sonnets and lyrics which were composed under the influence of Fanny or display a whiff of unfulfilled love.

To conclude, Forman was aware that he had a delicate task to accomplish: to present letters that would be considered by many to be scandalous, and to maintain a conception of Keats as an outstanding poet - whose fame was secure by then - while also taking the letters to Fanny Brawne into account. Nothing previously published can have prepared readers for the intensely erotic nature of the letters, or for the despair and bitterness contained in some of them. The generally prevailing popular impression of Keats at the time was dramatically at odds with the Keats of the letters to Fanny Brawne, and Forman knew this: seventeen years later, in the preface to his 1895 edition of Keats's letters, he would recall, 'when I made up my mind, after weighing the whole matter carefully, to publish those letters in 1878, I was fully alive to the risk of

⁴⁷² Barnard entitles the poem as 'A Dream, after reading Dante's Episode of Paolo and Francesca'. *Barnard* 334, 660.

vituperation, and not particularly solicitous on that branch of the subject.⁴⁷³ His scholarly attention to details and dating the postmarks of the letters and places of their composition, the identification of 'Charmian' as Jane Cox once and for all, and his attempt to construct a narrative of the relationship while also dealing with the letters as objects of scholarship and precise attention, are the marks of the first-class editor that Forman was. His insightful and original comments left a permanent impact on the subsequent editors of Keats's poetry and letters.

⁴⁷³ Harry Buxton Forman, ed. *The Letters of John Keats* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1895), xvi-xvii. Hereafter HBF, *Letters of Keats*.

CHAPTER 4

RESPONSES TO *LETTERS OF JOHN KEATS TO FANNY BRAWNE*, 1878-1884

I

REVIEWS OF *LJKFB*, 1878

The publication of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* in 1878 caused much shock and disbelief among Keats's readers – his admirers and critics alike. It needs to be remembered that periodical critics having conservative sympathies, such as Lockhart, Wilson, and Croker, had in effect accused the poet of composing a subversively sensuous and sensual poetry that served only to demoralise people by weakening the nation's faith in Christianity and the spirit of resentment and resistance against foreign threats in an unstable Europe. At all events, they detected danger and conspiracy in what they considered Keats's sickly imagination. The Pre-Raphaelites who, from the 1830s onwards, discovered Keats at different periods of their individual careers, looked at his picturesque poetry in a different light.⁴⁷⁴ They painted many richly appealing and colourful scenes from Keats's narrative poems such as *Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil*, *The Eve of St Agnes*, and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad'. It was exactly for the otherworldliness and fantasy so minutely described in his poetry that they thought of Keats as a master painter-poet. To them, Keats did not lisp sedition; his dreamy poetry had nothing to do with, nor need it have to do with, the factual and actual realities of life in a nascent industrial Britain. I have mentioned on pages 59 and 72 of this thesis that by 1850 Keats was considered one of the few great poets of Britain, in the judgement of

⁴⁷⁴ *The Critical Heritage* 32-33.

the young Pre-Raphaelites.⁴⁷⁵ From 1850 onwards, some Victorians still – probably very few after the publication of Sidney Colvin's *Keats* (1887)⁴⁷⁶ and hardly any after Robert Bridges' *John Keats: A Critical Essay* (1895)⁴⁷⁷ – judged Keats's poetry as without substance and its own moral integrity, or as representative of weakness of character in a poet whose fame had otherwise been established. It is in the light of this wider background that the impact of the publication of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* (1878) must be examined and assessed. It is evident that the editor of Keats's love-letters knew in advance that his little volume would create a backlash against him for making them public. The majority of the reviewers of *LJKFB* attacked the publication or Forman himself as responsible for it and each looked at Keats's love-letters from his own moral perspective. Naturally opinion differed as to their value and importance. The letters functioned as a mirror into which reviewers looked carefully and discovered their own personal image, which could be either acceptable or abhorrent. Forman's book was born into a Britain which had seen an increase in readers and more freedom of opinion than the cautious Britain of 1800s and 1810s. As for Severn, he read the love-letters 'with great pain' as he understood for the first time that the 'fatal passion [for Fanny Brawne] destroyed him'.⁴⁷⁸ He calculated that Keats did not have the courage to tell him in Rome about this serious passion and that 'the mental suffering of the Poet is evident at every page [of the love-letters] and in comparison with his other

⁴⁷⁵ *MacGillivray* liv-lxii.

⁴⁷⁶ Colvin's *Keats* in the *English Men of Letters Series* was reprinted in 1889, 1898, 1899, 1902 (the 'Library Edition' was reprinted in 1906, 1913, 1921), and 1909 (the 'Pocket Edition' was reprinted in 1915, 1916, 1918, 1923). *Keats and the Victorians* 73. See my full reference to Colvin's biography in footnote 379.

⁴⁷⁷ Robert Bridges, *John Keats: A Critical Essay* (privately printed by Lawrence & Bullen, MDCCCXCV). Hereafter *Robert Bridges*. See my full consideration of this book in the Conclusion of this thesis.

⁴⁷⁸ Severn's letter of 5 February 1878 to Forman in *HBF, Poetical Works* iv 218-219. The next quotation is from the same letter.

letters published by Lord Houghton there is no longer *that fine elasticity of spirit* which is the character of his writing'. In other words, Keats of the love letters showed some feminine and unmanly traits, an accusation levelled against him, as we shall see, by many reviewers of Forman's volume and in particular by Arnold and Swinburne. Here I discuss the reviews of the 1878 edition of the letters to Fanny Brawne.

On 16 February 1878, Sir Charles Dilke denounced Forman, the Lindons, and Fanny Brawne's character for the publication of Keats the 'man's love-letters'.⁴⁷⁹ Sir Charles states that by making public Keats's love-letters, Buxton Forman had breached the trust given to him and that he had acted like an Englishman who on the battlefield picks the pocket of a deceased comrade. Keats was not a commodity to be bought by Englishmen who worshipped his fame and searched for their own. However, the most stinging part of Sir Charles's article is reserved for his resentment at the exposure of Fanny Brawne and of Forman as a man who lacked 'good breeding':

If their publication under the circumstances alleged is the greatest impeachment of a woman's sense of womanly delicacy to be found in the history of literature, Mr. Forman's extraordinary preface is no less notable as a sign of the degradation to which the bookmaker has sunk.
(218)

There is in fact no 'preface' to the volume but Sir Charles clearly means to denigrate Forman's long 'INTRODUCTION' and the publisher's note in which the editor claims that he had the consent of the Lindons to publish the letters and that the publication had been foreseen by Fanny Brawne Lindon towards the end of her life. Respect and honour alike demand that there be a veil between the outside world and the private correspondence of two lovers. Forman was misled into the belief that he would attain fame by displaying the private feelings of Keats for his mistress. And the owners of the letters stood to gain from their publication, as did Forman, and equally dishonourably.

⁴⁷⁹ *Athenaeum* (Feb. 16, 1878), 218.

Sir Charles goes on to say that Keats the man would have cried out against their publication had he been alive. Turning his irritation on Fanny, he remarks that she should have kept them until her death approached and then she should have burned them or ordered them to be buried with her. Sir Charles's snobbish behaviour towards Forman was because he was a gentleman amateur in literature whereas Forman was a new kind of professional scholar and entrepreneur in the field of modern literature. There are two fundamental issues here which form the opposition at the heart of the quarrel between the two: Dilke's regard for his family's reputation by association with the Keats – Fanny Brawne correspondence, and the conflicting interests of the well to do literary amateur and the meticulous professional. Dilke and MacColl were the two editors of the *Athenaeum* who gave the weekly its due eminence by hiring as writers remarkable authors of literary works.⁴⁸⁰ Its editor (until 1846) and proprietor Charles Wentworth Dilke had a delicate taste both in matters of judgement and business. He avoided religious and political controversy. He was more successful than other editors in engaging writers and contributors who were experts in their subject matters. When the letters to Fanny Brawne were published, Norman MacColl was the editor 1871-1900 who restored the quality and reputation of the magazine after it had declined under the editorships of Hervey (until 1853) and Dixton (until 1869), because these two latter were more interested in matters of politics. The *Athenaeum* continued to dominate other weeklies of the 19th century because it offered a broader range of subject-matter. During most of the century, the *Athenaeum* followed a notably moderate path in its criticism of literary works: it neither praised nor condemned the works of a particular

⁴⁸⁰ Dickie A. Spurgeon, 'ATHENAEUM, THE' in Alvin Sullivan, ed. *British Literary Magazines*, 4 vols (Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1983-1986), vol. ii: *The Romantic Age 1789-1836* 21-24. Hereafter *British Literary Magazines*.

author consistently, but allowed individual reviewers the liberty of their judgment on individual works.

Sir Charles's was the first review of Forman's volume; as he had deplored Forman's preparations prior to the publication of the letters, he was ready to disapprove of them when in print. He let Fanny Llanos know about the volume by writing a letter to her. In her reply of 15 March 1878 to Sir Charles, she accused Margaret Lindon of giving the letters to Forman. Sir Charles took advantage of this accusation and announced in *The Athenaeum*, 23 March 1878, that Fanny Llanos had expressed her 'strong disapproval' of the publication.⁴⁸¹ Forman, however, knew how to defuse the tension between Fanny Llanos and himself, and took the practical steps necessary to win her over. He sent a copy of the book along with a reconciliatory letter to her. In a letter of 6 May 1878, she assured him that he was more than forgiven. She announced that she did not know that Sir Charles had planned to make public her dissatisfaction with the publication of her deceased brother's love-letters (168). Again Forman wrote her a letter in which he confirmed that Keats's love-letters told the truth about the poet's soul and completed the insufficient and incomplete portrayal of his character by the previous authors of his biography. He stated that those critics on both sides of the Atlantic who did not appreciate the publication did not care for the poet's other works either. Fanny Llanos replied on 14 May 1878 according him her moral support and best wishes (169).⁴⁸² Lord Houghton, the eminent and respected biographer of Keats, joined

⁴⁸¹ *The Everlasting Spell* 168. Further references to Joanna Richardson's book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

⁴⁸² Fanny Llanos was convinced that neither Keats's friend Dilke nor his grandson Sir Charles was honest in their dealings with the affairs of the Keats family. Consider a passage of her letter of 29 June 1879 to Forman:

The conduct of Sir C. Dilke appears most singular I think he must have a twist in his temper, like his grandfather, who for some time was

the throng of those who were repelled by the publication of the letters to Fanny Brawne. In 1876, he had refused to buy the manuscripts of the love-letters, which had been shown to him by Herbert Lindon. In a sarcastic reference to *LJKFB*, Houghton wrote to Sir Charles that he regretted that he had left behind no records of a poetic love affair to be published by his family after his death (167). He judged that 'Forman is a well-meaning man, but his publication of the "Letters" is the measure of his delicacy and discretion.' (172)

The author of the review in *Notes and Queries*, 2 March 1878, remarks that the publication of the love-letters is an unprecedented enterprise because they cannot be compared with any other published correspondence of so intimate a nature.⁴⁸³ The letters should have remained private and confidential. Their publication is the result of one man's sense of pride in possessing them combined with his anticipation of the curiosity of the admiring public. These documents do not add to the reader's knowledge of the poet's life and character, even though they are interesting in themselves as indicating the effects of illness on his later life. Keats the poet and Keats the man are the same, and the qualities occasionally shown in the letters are abundantly present in the poems. Strong feelings in their nature are transient and a middle-aged Keats, had he lived, would have looked upon them with pity and derision. Keats would have created something lasting had he transferred his feelings into excellent verse. Had he lived he would never have allowed his private letters to see the light of day. But the

my Guardian, and once in a fit of ill humour injured my interests rather seriously, and what was still more galling to me, and never to be forgotten, his sneering observations on the nervous irritability of my poor brother.

Quoted in *The Two Forgers* 287.

⁴⁸³ *Notes and Queries* (2 March 1878), 179-180.

fact that he did not, does not justify their publication. The letters remind us of many of the poet's remarkable qualities such as his ardour, strength of soul, and love of beauty but they also magnify the impression in the reader's mind of the illness that gnawed at his spirit. However, the letters do not signify that Keats was unmanly or sentimental, even though the English in which he writes is 'odd and flighty' and only occasionally of any literary excellence. In the love-letter of June (?) 1820, Keats says, 'I long to believe in immortality. . . . I wish to believe in immortality.'⁴⁸⁴ Commenting in a footnote on the above lines, Forman states that here the poet

was seemingly in a different phase of belief from that in which the death of his brother Tom found him. At that time he recorded that he and Tom both firmly believed in immortality.⁴⁸⁵ . . . a further indication of his having shifted from the moorings of orthodoxy may be found in the expression in Letter XXXV, "I appeal to you by the blood of that Christ you believe in:"⁴⁸⁶—not "we believe in."⁴⁸⁷

Forman was misled by reading the other letters of Keats in the altered versions of Milnes in which Keats's critical views on religion were either softened or their sense changed. *Notes and Queries* is the only magazine which pays attention to these passages of the letters together with Keats's saying that 'my Creed is Love and you are its only tenet'⁴⁸⁸ and Forman's comments on them. The reviewer notices that Forman has himself softened, by an 'elegant meiosis' (a figure of speech that deliberately

⁴⁸⁴ *LJKFB* 101 (*Gittings* 379).

⁴⁸⁵ 'I have a firm belief in immortality, and so had Tom' in the letter of 16 December 1818-4 January 1819 to his family in America. *LLR* i 246. *Gittings* transcribes, 'I have scarce a doubt of immortality of some nature of [*for* or] other—neither had Tom.' *Gittings* 175.

⁴⁸⁶ Letter of May (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 96 (*Gittings* 377).

⁴⁸⁷ *LJKFB* 101 n. 1.

⁴⁸⁸ Letter of 13 October 1819 in *LJKFB* 36 (*Gittings* 334).

reduces the importance of something⁴⁸⁹), the impact of Keats's striking and dramatic statement of belief. Keats explicitly substitutes an erotic religion for the orthodox belief in Christianity that Fanny Brawne herself holds. W. J. Thoms established *Notes and Queries* in 1849 to create a space to publish the numerous and increasing number of folklore items and other short notes that the *Athenaeum* editor could not accommodate.⁴⁹⁰ So the purpose of the periodical was to record and preserve the items that were about to be lost and thereby make them available to interested students. It put emphasis on subjects such as language, literature, history, and genealogy and served as a vehicle for the quick exchange of information; it particularly served the rapidly growing reading public who did not have access to large libraries or distant sources of information. Because of its interest in areas such as language, literature, and biography, the periodical played an important role in the founding of the English Dialect Society, the preparation of the *English Dialect Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its supplements. The review of Forman's volume condemned the publication of the love-letters but nevertheless it appreciated Keats's ardour and spiritual and physical love of beauty in them; and, consistent with its scholarly character, it took an interest in the sense of the exact wording of the letters.

The reviewer of an article entitled 'A POET'S LOVE-LETTERS' in *The Spectator* (March 30, 1878) judges that Forman's publication has not done justice to Keats's fame and it would have been better if he had asked the owners of the letters to

⁴⁸⁹ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1993), 86.

⁴⁹⁰ Dickie A. Spurgeon's 'NOTES AND QUERIES' in *British Literary Magazines* iii 281-285.

throw them into the fire.⁴⁹¹ The poet would have destroyed them himself, had he known that they would be published one day, because reading somebody's love-letters is an intrusion upon their privacy. The letters, as private outpourings of Keats the man's feelings, now seem to readers, as 'unseemly, eccentric, [and] wanting in reticence' (411). If ordinary people knew that their secret relationship would be exposed to public scrutiny, they would not write about love. Readers feel the 'naked, unnatural effect' of the love letters. The ugly black silhouette of Fanny Brawne – who is represented as 'a young lady with a high cap, an impossible waist, and a big nose' – only makes us the more anxious to know about the other side of Keats's correspondence of which we do not know anything. On this basis the letters are a moral failure because when we read them and look at the silhouette we feel that we are 'being made party to a breach of personal confidence' (411). (The quotation anticipates some of Matthew Arnold's views about the love-letters, which I shall discuss at a later stage when I analyse his 1880 essay, 'John Keats'.) Thus, the publication of the love-letters does damage to Fanny's character apart from the damage that it inflicts on Keats's character, because she betrayed him by admitting that his letters to her might one day be published⁴⁹²; this implies either she did not fully understand Keats's painful revelations or did not respect them as she should. What to Forman seemed a positive and prescient quality in Fanny's character, became betrayal and treason to the reviewer in *The Spectator*. In the most interesting of the love-letters, Keats expresses his views on poetry and the love of beauty. In other words, his best love-letters are those in which Keats is less personal and more imaginative and literary. The reviewer argues that in his letter of 16 August 1819, Keats looks at Fanny as an object of beauty and loves her because of her beauty

⁴⁹¹ *The Spectator* (March 30, 1878), 410-12.

⁴⁹² There is no record revealing that Fanny Brawne gave her consent as regards the publication of Keats's letters to her. Forman cites her as saying that one day these letters will be published. NOTE to *LJKFB* vi.

and not her individuality, a point that may have made Fanny jealous of her own beauty because she would have thought that if she was not beautiful Keats would not have loved her. The letters are poetic expressions that are uttered with energy and manliness and one discovers genius and character in all of them (411-12). For Hutton, the editor and owner of the periodical throughout the 1870s and 1880s, genius was superior to art and imagination to form.⁴⁹³ So the response to the love-letters in the review seems to show the impress of this point of view, and in general an example of critical impartiality as regards the merits and demerits of Forman's book, the pros and cons of the privacy-publicity debate.

In an article in *Atlantic Monthly*, 41 (1878), the reviewer of the American edition of Forman's book begins by condemning Lord Houghton's biography of Keats for being devoid of literary perception and featuring a bad prose style. The biography brought to light Keats's obscure writings such as *Otho the Great*, *King Stephen*, and other immature works of the poet. Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne should never have been given to the public on the pretext that they have literary value; 'they should reverently have been permitted to crumble into dust', says the reviewer.⁴⁹⁴ There were no serious charges against Keats's and Fanny's names for Buxton Forman to refute and remove. The letters do not fill in a gap in the poet's life and do not provide us with a significant link with what we know already. Only an 'unhealthy appetite' has an interest in such stuff as love-letters, which can be cured only by 'starvation'. The letters reveal the secret pangs of an over-sensitive soul who was ill and sorrowful. Buxton Forman's work is odious and had Keats known of Forman's intention to publish his love-letters, he would have protested strongly. If the publication is not an act of cruelty

⁴⁹³ Richard D. Fulton, 'SPECTATOR, THE' in *British Literary Magazines* ii 394.

⁴⁹⁴ *Atlantic Monthly*, 41 (1878), 803.

to Keats's memory, it is certainly a disgraceful development. The reviewer quotes the last four stanzas of Tennyson's poem, *To —, After Reading a Life and Letters* (published in *The Examiner*, 24 March 1849) to remind the readers of Tennyson's position on the publication of Milnes's biography of Keats. Hallam Tennyson remarked that 'My father was indignant that Keats' wild love-letters should have been published⁴⁹⁵

In contrast to the *Atlantic Monthly*, the reviewer in *Lippincott's Magazine*, 21 (Jan/June 1878) feels that the volume sheds new light on aspects of Keats's life, which had, to a large extent, escaped the attention of the previous biographers of the poet.⁴⁹⁶ 'This handful of letters' reveals Keats's character during his last illness and show vividly the torment of the moment. There is neither effort or affectation in them. The poet joked in the love-letter of March (?) 1820 that he would like to send his letter to Murray to publish it.⁴⁹⁷ This was a bitter jest that came to be true but it showed Keats's anxious and worried soul remembering the previous unfair reception of his poetry. The letters show how illness or changing mood affected and influenced Keats's unsteady character as he was approaching death. Spontaneous morbid feelings and pain in the soul made his pen move unconsciously faster and faster on the sheet. The fatal disease of the sick man is detectable all over the letters. He was trying to carry on his love while knowing that death was lurking in the dark (517). Keats was not naturally morbid, weak, or jealous of Fanny Brawne and Charles Brown; it was the pressure of circumstances that made him behave deliriously. In ordinary circumstances, Keats's

⁴⁹⁵ Quoted in *The Poems of Tennyson* ii 297. See my previous discussion of Tennyson's poem as a reaction to the publication of Milnes's biography of Keats on page 79 of this thesis.

⁴⁹⁶ *Lippincott's Magazine*, 21 (Jan/June 1878), 516.

⁴⁹⁷ *LJKFB* 84 (*Gittings* 370).

healthy body accommodated his poetic sensibility and natural, imaginative, powerful, and active mind. The reviewer goes on to say that there are 'moans of life-weariness in his letters' as Keats attempted to shrink from the world and from the miseries therein. Nevertheless, he loved life and wanted to live.⁴⁹⁸ The reviewer notes that readers are left in the dark as to the character of Keats's warm correspondent Fanny Brawne. If it was important for Forman to publish the intimate correspondence of a poet, it should have been equally important for him to write the biography of the person to whom the letters were addressed. Keats's 'half-satirical' description of Fanny in the letter of 16 December 1818-4 January 1819 to the George Keatses in America⁴⁹⁹ together with the small silhouette do more harm than justice to her reputation and leave readers in even a greater obscurity as to her character (518).

The reviewer in *Appletons' Journal*, 4 (1878) feels that the editor of the *LJKFB*, 'this most objectionable book', ought to pay a high price for publishing Keats's personal letters⁵⁰⁰. The tone of his letter is jocular and sarcastic. There are two things that must be kept secret: one is the relation of man to God and the other, his relation to his mistress. This is the 'supreme law' and it is because of this honourable sacred law that people write honest love-letters to each other. In Keats's case, this law has been blatantly violated by the publisher of his love-letters (379). We know who Keats was

⁴⁹⁸ Andrew Bennett's stimulating and insightful article, 'Keats's Prescience, His Renown' in *Romanticism* 2.1 (1996): 9-26 might be rewritten in the light of Keats's love-letters. Instead of saying that Keats's future and posthumous fame had been presciently inscribed in some of his poems which represented his weak and decaying body, one might make use of the poet's love-letters to make a stronger case for Bennett's arguments.

⁴⁹⁹ *LJKFB* xxxvii-xxxviii (*Gittings* 182-183).

⁵⁰⁰ *Appletons' Journal*, 4 (1878), 382.

and how he lived but we do not know much about Fanny Brawne except for what Forman tells us about her. As regards the letters:

I know of nothing comparable with them in English literature—know nothing that is so unselfish, so longing, so adoring—nothing that is so mad, so pitiful, so utterly weak and wretched. (381)

Keats was a great genius but he lacked common-sense because, unlike Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, he did not know how to deal with the world and did not know how to woo and win the heart of a woman. As we shall see, Arnold asserted from 1848-1880 that unlike the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, Keats's did not contain a criticism of life. To many Victorians including Arnold and Swinburne, Keats did not express love in a genteel way to Fanny Brawne, and he did not know how to do so because of his allegedly inadequate education. I shall discuss this extensively later in the chapter. The reviewer goes on to state that from his first letter to Fanny, we understand that he surrendered himself to her passively. This is that love at first sight as in Shakespeare's 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'⁵⁰¹ He said to Fanny Brawne, 'You absorb me in spite of myself—you alone; for I look not forward with any reference to what is called being settled in the world. I tremble at domestic care.'⁵⁰² Keats should have been trying to be a good husband for Fanny and to marry her (a thing that he could not do) instead of wanting to die for her. With every letter, Keats's love for Fanny grew stronger and more intense: 'I cannot exist without you. . . . Love is my religion—I could die for that. I could die for you. My creed is Love, and you are its only tenet.'⁵⁰³ One cannot understand from the love-letters that Keats was a poet, because he hardly quotes from his poetry in them. After all, Fanny might not have

⁵⁰¹ Shakespeare's *As You Like It* III.vi.83.

⁵⁰² Letter of 25 July 1819 in *LJKFB* 14 (*Gittings* 271).

⁵⁰³ Letter of 13 October 1819 in *LJKFB* 36 (*Gittings* 334).

cared for Keats's poetry, at least not until the spell of Keats's enemies (Croker, Gifford, Wilson, and Lockhart) on his poetry, was gone. Her silhouette does not tell us much about her character and her relationship with Keats, but it clearly stands for a 'cold, hard, haughty young woman'. We do know that she made Keats seem ridiculous in the eyes of his friends and for that reason he hated his friends, especially Brown: 'I will never see or speak to him until we are both old men, if we are to be. I *will* resent my heart having been made a foot-ball.'⁵⁰⁴ The reviewer calls Keats's letters 'foolish' and uses the word 'boy' in various places within the article, thereby reminding readers of the early vitriolic criticism of his poetry and confirming that still in the late Victorian period, some critics thought that the poet's modest social origins could be sniped at.⁵⁰⁵ Maybe Fanny kept the letters for forty four years so that she could give vent to her vanity, to say to future generations that once she kept captive a 'crazy young English poet . . . desperately in love with her' (382). The descendants of Fanny Brawne let the letters be published because of the psychological insight they afforded and the financial gain that might be expected to accrue from their publication and it would not be too long before these 'original follies and sorrows . . . [and] shambles' are sold in the open market. This turned out to be a true prediction because F. S. Ellis, Forman's old friend, tried to sell the love-letters piece by piece at an auction in 1885⁵⁰⁶, which prompted Oscar Wilde to compose a sonnet on the incident:

On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
 To one he loved in secret, and apart.
 And now the brawlers of the auction mart
 Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,

⁵⁰⁴ Letter of May (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 94-5 (Gittings 377).

⁵⁰⁵ Swinburne referred to Keats of the love letters as a 'manly sort of boy', which I shall discuss later in the chapter.

⁵⁰⁶ *The Two Forgers* 55.

Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote
 The merchant's price. I think they love not art
 Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
 That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat.

Is it not said that many years ago,
 In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
 With torches through the midnight, and began
 To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
 Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
 Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe?⁵⁰⁷

The reviewer goes on to say that it was the desire to become famous – after editing Shelley's works – and not financial motives that made Forman publish the letters, because, at the time of the preparation of the love-letters for the press, he lived in Marlborough Hill, St. John's Wood, a respectable and prosperous area. The reviewer ends on the sarcastic but humorous note that Forman had resuscitated the fame of Shelley, and the time had come for him to resuscitate the fame of Keats. And so he deserves to be called the 'monumental resuscitator' (382).

In a favourable review of Forman's *LJKFB* in the *Eclectic Magazine*, 27 (1878), the reviewer says that England has been waiting for the publication of the letters of Keats, 'the poet of poets', who talks of his heartfelt sorrow and passion in them.⁵⁰⁸ The review is an appreciative and sensitive response to the letters but considers them as another kind of writing than even those letters written to male correspondents. Perhaps it is the genius of the poet, which prompts readers to intrude upon his privacy by reading his love-letters, even though they may do this with a sense of shame and reserve. Keats was a 'noble poet and great man' and we hold his letters with 'reverent hands' and

⁵⁰⁷ *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 728. Hereafter *Collected Works of Wilde*.

⁵⁰⁸ *Eclectic Magazine*, 27 (1878), 495. The review was originally published in *The Academy*.

derive pleasure and joy in reading them (495). Fanny's silhouette is a clever and characteristic embodiment of her and though it does not represent her original beauty, it reflects her 'elegance, vivacity, a fine air of distinction, and . . . prettiness' (496). After quoting from seven letters, the reviewer maintains that the style of these letters is very simple and natural, because the poet was not thinking of putting literary ideas in them. However, the literary nature of some of the love-letters indicates that literature (English, French together with Greek and Roman mythology) was part of Keats's mind: in the letter of 8 July 1819, Keats states that 'I have so much of you in my heart that I must turn Mentor when I see a chance of harm befalling you'⁵⁰⁹; 'In my present state of Health I feel too much separated from you and could almost speak to you in the words of Lorenzo's Ghost to Isabella "Your Beauty grows upon me and I feel / A greater love through all my essence steal"'⁵¹⁰; 'I have been turning over two volumes of Letters written between Rousseau and two Ladies in the perplexed strain of mingled finesse and sentiment What would Rousseau have said at seeing our little correspondence! . . . I don't care much—I would sooner have Shakespeare's opinion about the matter'⁵¹¹; 'There's the Thrush again—I can't afford it—he'll run me up a pretty Bill for Music'⁵¹²; '. . . there is a great difference between going off in warm blood like Romeo, and making one's exit like a frog in a frost'⁵¹³; 'For this Week past I have been employed in

⁵⁰⁹ *LJKFB* 9 (*Gittings* 266). In Greek mythology, Mentor was 'the tutor by whom (or Athena in his form) Telemachus, son of Odysseus, was guided'. See *The Chambers Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 2001), 1004.

⁵¹⁰ From the love-letter of Feb. (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 47 (*Gittings* 356). The lines are from *Isabella* XL 7-8. See *Barnard* 249.

⁵¹¹ From the love-letter of 27 (?) Feb. 1820 in *LJKFB* 77-78 (*Gittings* 362).

⁵¹² From the love-letter of March (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 81 (*Gittings* 369). The quotation is reminiscent of line 10, 'Singest of summer in full-throated ease', of the first stanza of 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

⁵¹³ From the love-letter of March (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 83-4 (*Gittings* 370).

marking the most beautiful passages in Spenser, intending it for you . . .'⁵¹⁴; 'My love to you is "true as truth's simplicity and simpler than the infancy of truth"⁵¹⁵ as I think I once said before'⁵¹⁶; and the last and most interesting of all, 'Shakespeare always sums up matters in the most sovereign manner. Hamlet's heart was full of such Misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia "Go to a Nunnery, go, go!"'⁵¹⁷.⁵¹⁸ Indeed, our modern perception of some of the love-letters is that the distinction between these and those letters previously published by Milnes is not so great as that, because in his letters to family and friends, the poet also transcribes poems and discusses literature.

Many periodicals referred to Fanny Brawne's name with disrespect. In a brief review of the letters to Fanny Brawne, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* wrote that because she did not think of the publication of the letters to her as an undesirable act, she was not a delicate and loyal person. 'The moral is, be careful to whom you write love-letters.'⁵¹⁹ This sentence implies that reasonable people must be very cautious to whom they write love-letters because the letters may get published and thereby provoke a scandal; a 'confidential' letter, says the reviewer, should be the 'outpouring of a perfectly free heart'. This means that no love-letter can remain confidential for ever because one day it will be laid bare before the public and there can be no perfectly

⁵¹⁴ From the love-letter of 4 July (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 92 (*Gittings* 383).

⁵¹⁵ From Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* III.ii.176-7.

⁵¹⁶ From the love-letter of June (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 102-103 (*Gittings* 379-380).

⁵¹⁷ *Hamlet* III.i.123, 132, 142, and 152.

⁵¹⁸ From the love-letter of August (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 106 (*Gittings* 386).

⁵¹⁹ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 57 (1878), 466. The next quotation is from the next page.

carefree lover because, as in Keats's case, he knows that there will be individuals who will know about his personal life.

Scribner's Monthly states that Keats's letters were not a 'gift' to the world as their industrious editor Forman claims.⁵²⁰ If the world has them now it is because of Forman's interest in transaction and trade as he expected financial gain from his publication.⁵²¹ Like many other periodicals, *Scribner's* censures Fanny Brawne for being a 'cold, handsome, selfish, "self-sufficing"' woman as it too takes its stance regarding her from Sir Charles's biased and cynical propaganda against her when he quoted Fanny as saying that it was better for Keats to be left in oblivion for ever. Keats's letters 'are repressed; he is fighting hard for life; carrying on his literary work manfully; refusing every indulgence that would interfere with his recovery'. In other words, the reviewer is trying to say that for Keats, composing poetry was the number one priority in life and he did not welcome any interference with it. Meeting this lady was both good and bad; good because it was a source of pleasure and attraction for him, bad because it caused him much natural irritation. Death redeemed him from the paws of this flirtatious, shallow, and unfaithful lady whose 'unlovely qualities' are known to every reader.

In a more or less impartial review of the love-letters, *The Contemporary Review* wrote that we will never be able to judge the psychology of the letters unless we know about the two sides of the correspondence. And so only the lover and the beloved know

⁵²⁰ *LJKFB* xvii.

⁵²¹ *Scribner's Monthly*, No. 6 (April 1878), 890. The next quotations are from pages 889-890.

the key to the 'cryptograph'.⁵²² Keats was poor and knew that his chances of living were scant and knew that if he went on to marry Fanny he would destroy the poetic flames in his nature but he had become engaged to her. Because he knew that death was approaching, he gave vent to his anger in the love-letters: 'the world is too brutal for me; I am glad there is such a thing as the grave. . . . I wish I was in your arms, full of faith, or that a Thunderbolt would strike me. God bless you. J. K.'⁵²³ In some other letters Keats is angry with Brown but because we know that Brown was a good friend of Keats we wonder how much of Keats's anger is justified. From Fanny Brawne's silhouette we understand that she had 'a strong will, a full share of self-reliance, and a good understanding prone to specialities of pursuit.' However we do not know how she reacted to Keats's realistic passions because we do not have sufficient information about her. One thing is clear and that is she and Brown were both wiser than Keats because they kept a distance from him as they knew that being too much in the company of an ailing person would make the situation worse for him. The reviewer of the article suggests that Keats was like 'a caged bird beating itself to death against the bars'. This is a remarkable note because it represents Keats as a nightingale who is composing an elegy on his own demise by laying his heart bare before Fanny Brawne. The review thanks Forman for proving for the first time that the Anglo-Indian lady whom Keats refers to as a lady with the grace of a leopardess, in the letter of 14-31 October 1818 to George and Georgiana Keats, was not Fanny Brawne.

Fanny Brawne became a scapegoat in the reception of Keats's poetry and construction of his character because many reviewers were tearing down her image to

⁵²² *The Contemporary Review*, 31 (Dec. 1877 – March 1878), 900. The next quotations are from pages 900-901.

⁵²³ Letter of August (?) 1820 in *LJKFB* 107 (*Gittings* 386).

build up Keats's reputation; they thought she was at fault in being Keats's mistress because she had not contributed to the welfare and posthumous reputation of Keats. Her prediction, in the NOTE to Forman's volume, that it was likely that the love-letters would be published in the future, was an inconsiderate remark and another indication of her unfaithfulness towards Keats. It was not until the publication of *Letters of Fanny Brawne to Fanny Keats (1820-1824)* in 1936, when Fanny Brawne was able to speak for herself in her letters and change the unfair and incomplete criticisms of her character that knowledge about Fanny Brawne – a shadowy figure in Keats's love-letters – was greatly augmented.⁵²⁴

In all the reviews there is a debate over the private-public divide on the question whether the letters should have been published at all. We can look at the controversy from two standpoints: first, the issue of the publication of an author's private life and secrets is a matter of social convention, i.e. certain private, personal, confidential exchanges should simply not be published. In 1877, Thomas Edison invented the phonograph and so *The Spectator's* analogy between publication and recording by the recently-invented machine evidently expresses a current anxiety about a technological advance that encroaches on privacy. Hutton, the editor and proprietor (1861-1897) of the weekly, suspected contemporary scientific advances on the grounds that they were materialistic and therefore opposed to the spirituality of Christianity.⁵²⁵ All the editors of the magazine held a conservative opinion of art: they wanted it to have a moral use and purpose, to solve the contemporary problems of the human community. The publication of the love letters did not have an ethical purpose and did not relieve the

⁵²⁴ See page 23 and footnote 67 of this thesis for a reference to this volume and my previous consideration of some of her remarks as to the cause of Keats's death.

⁵²⁵ Richard D. Fulton, 'SPECTATOR, THE' in *British Literary Magazines* ii 393.

pains of misfortune. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, *The Spectator* opposed literary naturalism because it conflicted with the ideals of imagination and free will that Hutton believed in.⁵²⁶ From a strictly practical point of view, Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne might be taken to reveal that because the poet met the wrong person for love, his love-making was doomed and because the disease from which he suffered was in the family, he was himself doomed to die early. The love-letters were written over a period of two years in 1819 to 1820 but because they were published in the late Victorian period they appealed to those interests in readers which had been stimulated by naturalistic fiction. The weekly had readers from all walks of life and it encouraged them to leave room for all possible interpretations of a controversial matter such as the issue of Keats's love-letters. *Appletons' Journal* on page 379 simply proclaims a 'law' which ought to govern private correspondence, appealing to 'honor'. The *Eclectic Magazine* is an exception as it justifies the publication on grounds that sufficient time has passed to shield the principals from harm, and because of the natural interest of readers in Keats's life.

Second, it is also broadly accepted by the reviewers that 'public' and 'private' designate two essentially different kinds of writing, in this case poetry and the personal letter. We would not now accept that distinction in either sense as absolute. We think that we learn a good deal from a poet's private correspondence, which illuminates his poetry, and we also consider the difference between a private letter and a published poem as a matter of degree rather than kind. In this regard, *The Spectator* on page 410 remarks that if one's personal feelings and love words are expressed in verse, they become everlasting and of use to many, whereas if they are presented as the personal love letters of one individual to another, they will be scrutinised by a few who will be

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.* ii 394.

disgusted by their indecency. Verse is superior to prose because it is a greater medium for conveying one's intimate feelings. Compare the universal charm of 'Thou still unravished bride of quietness' in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' with similar imagery in Keats's personal utterance, 'You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist' in his letter of 13 October 1819. Both quotations show the irresistible, seductive yet subduing feminine power; the former mode of utterance is grander as it says much in a few words and once memorised can hardly be forgotten whereas the second one, in the eyes of the reviewer and no doubt of many readers, is bound to time and space and is a temporary, short-lived personal tale which once read and spoken of is heard no more. By composing poetry one creates an immortal species of writing whereas love letters are not immortal because they are rendered in prose which is limited to time.

Third, Victorian society was more explicitly concerned than nowadays with the moral and religious aspects of life; the conventions of society demanded that people conduct themselves and conform to acceptable behaviour (at least for the sake of the outward show of it). Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne reveal passages which were considered shocking to current public taste: in the letter of 5, 6 August 1819 we read that he enjoyed reading Fanny Brawne's letters during a service in the Winchester cathedral. 'At Winchester I shall get your letters more readily; and it being a cathedral city, I shall have a pleasure, always a great one to me when near a Cathedral, of reading them during the service up and down the aisle.'⁵²⁷ This, says *The Spectator*, was 'rather a cynical peripatetic pleasure' which was careless of the happiness of others.

Fourth, certain periodicals reached the conclusion that Forman was avid for fame and gain from his controversial edition. *The Athenaeum* on page 218 remarks that

⁵²⁷ LJKFB 19-20 (*Gittings* 275).

Forman had been vulgarised by 'fame-worship'. *Appletons'* on 382 criticises Forman as a new kind of professional editor interested in gain for his labours and in gaining fame by association with great poets such as Keats and Shelley. There is no conception shown in any of the reviews that these letters and Keats's poetry can be thought of as part of a whole artistic production and temperament. Instead, the letters are considered as the production of another kind of Keats, a different writer almost from the poet. *Appletons'* on page 381 indicates that, in the letters, Keats lacks common-sense in his own interest because the way to win Fanny Brawne's heart was not to surrender to her and lay his heart bare before her. It was inappropriate to cry in such a lamentable fashion to indicate that he was her captive.

By 1878, Keats's reputation as a poet was high and the publication of a substantial number of letters by him was a major literary event. With the publication of the Fanny Brawne letters in 1878, almost all of the letters he wrote took their place in the public domain. This marks an important point in the history of the reception of Keats the poet because the unusually candid and personal nature of the love-letters sets a different challenge to public taste and to criticism. In 1877, a year before the publication of the love-letters, the phonograph was invented and the invention seemed to some to threaten the boundaries separating the public from private as private conversations could be recorded and listened to a hundred years later. This new technology made *The Spectator* keenly aware of what is private and what is public. It proposed an analogy according to which Keats's letters had been recorded and were played back in after years. For most reviewers of the letters the private man Keats and the public poet Keats were different beings. When we look closely at these letters in our own age we are apt to think that Keats lived a life in which literature and the actual events and feelings of his life are not separable.

II

ARNOLD ON KEATS'S POETRY, LETTERS, AND CHARACTER

The Victorians were interested in Keats's personality and character more than in that of any other poet.⁵²⁸ The interest in Keats's character became particularly marked after the appearance of Milnes's volumes in 1848 and was the subject of discussion in reviews of Milnes's book. In a well-known letter of probably early December 1848 written by Arnold to Clough, we discover an interesting difference of opinion between the young Arnold and the mature author of the 1880 essay on Keats:

What a brute you were to tell me to read Keats' Letters [in *LLLR*]. However it is over now: and reflection resumes her power over agitation. What harm he has done in English Poetry.⁵²⁹

Arnold does not tell Clough the direction of the 'reflection' which had removed his 'agitation'. But as he continues with the letter, he provides some clarification. 'Keats with a very high gift,' Arnold goes on to say, '. . . cannot produce the truly living and moving' in his poetry, because he did not have 'an Idea of the world'. If he had started with 'an Idea of the world' or at least had some 'isolated ideas', he would not have been prevailed upon by 'the world's multitudinousness'. Instead of testing his general conception of things against his experience of them, Keats brought to his art a 'desire of fulness [*sic*]'. He wanted to compose poetry about various aspects of life but did not

⁵²⁸ *Lives of the Poet* 59.

⁵²⁹ Cecil Y. Lang, ed., *The Letters of Mathew Arnold*, 6 vols (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1996-2001), 1: 128-129. Clough, as indicated by Lang, was reading Milnes's biography after it was published on August 15, 1848. Hereafter *Letters of Arnold*. Further references to Lang's edition will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

have the means to make his vision of them coherent: in other words, not starting with one single idea, he had no framework for dealing with 'all other things' which he encountered later. Arnold had an ambivalent view of Keats's poetry and character, which shadows all his interpretations whenever he writes about Keats in the period 1848 to 1880. In his letter of c. March 1, 1849 to Clough, the young Arnold, aged 27, points out that poetry should convey 'thoughts & feelings' by its 'grand style'. He then goes on to set out his definition of what makes a character noble:

What is Keats? A style & form-seeker, & this with an impetuosity that heightens the effect of his style almost painfully. . . . in Sophocles what is valuable is . . . the grand moral effects produced by *Style*. For the style is the expression of the nobility of the poet's character, as the matter is the expression of the richness of his mind: but on men character produces as great an effect as mind. (133)

Arnold's touching upon style and matter as the elements that together make the greatness of a poet is of the utmost importance. Keats's style and subject matter were derided by his contemporary reviewers. Here, Arnold is trying to inform his friend that Keats's character shows a development towards maturity from the composition of his youthful poems of the 1817 and 1818 volumes – which displayed chaotic styles – to the publication of the poems of the 1820 volume in which he showed greater control. Commenting on Keats's (and Shelley's) language and imagery, in a letter of 28 October 1852 to the same correspondent, Arnold states that Keats (and Shelley) thought that the object of poetry was to produce 'the exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity, of the Elizabethan poets' but they were following false track, because the Elizabethan poets advocated 'great plainness of speech' and did not aim at style at the expense of matter (245). Unlike the verse of the Elizabethans, Keats's poetry does not unite religion and poetry because he left the Christian religion out of the sphere of his writing. For the modern poets, including Keats, what must matter is the

'contents' of poetry which should be rendered in a 'language . . . [and] style' that must be 'very plain direct and severe' (246). In a long poem such as *Endymion*, the style is chaotic and not a homogeneous whole, because in some episodes and parts the degree of its ornamentation changes. The change of style represents a change of character with which Keats is grappling. Part of Arnold's argument is a recollection in other terms of the debates published in *Blackwood's* and *The Quarterly*, which gave currency to the view that since Keats's various poems did not tackle the problems of his age and country and were difficult to follow, this was a reflection of Keats's undecided and vacillating character. Arnold will return to the question of the moral tendency in Keats's poetry again in his 1880 essay on the poet, which I shall discuss in detail later in the chapter. Issues of his style and character were enthusiastically discussed throughout the years of Keats's lifetime as well as after his death. In 1853 the *Autobiography* of Benjamin Robert Haydon had included an account of a sensuous Keats who was devastated by malicious criticism. In a letter of 3 August 1853 to Clough, Arnold doubts the credibility of Haydon's account, saying, 'Haydon himself is a false *butcher*—revolting' (270). The sharp riposte to Haydon's account of Keats's temporary drunkenness is to be contrasted with Arnold's light-hearted and generous retelling of the same story in his 1880 essay. By the time he wrote this essay, the pendulum had swung once again towards discussions of Keats's feminine character, a subject that is treated most insistently in Swinburne's 1882 essay on the poet. From his letter of 29 November 1859 to Joseph Severn we understand that Arnold had read Keats's sonnet, 'Bright star' in the holograph fair copy written opposite the beginning of *A Lover's Complaint* in the 1806 *Poetical Works of William Shakespeare*, now at Keats House, Hampstead. He notices that Keats's '. . . markings of [Shakespeare's volume] . . . are invaluable as proof where he got his *manner*' (509). Arnold thought that Keats's character, from 1848 until the appearance of Keats's love letters in 1878, was sensuous

but manly. In other words his idea of Keats, before 1878, was of a man of balanced qualities, worthy to be considered as one who had acquired some at least of his merits from one of the great writers of the language.

In the preface to his *Poems* of 1853, Arnold argued that Shakespeare was great in terms of choosing subjects for his plays, constituting poetic action, and expressing the matter he had chosen; that is, he possessed 'the power of execution'.⁵³⁰ Keats is the best example among those poets who felt the influence of Shakespeare so far as the contents and details of his works are concerned. Readers continue to look at Keats's character with interest because of his remarkable genius and the pathetic way he died, says Arnold (665). However, unlike his model Shakespeare, he did not employ a wholeness of style in his long poems such as *Endymion*, which, as a result, is an incoherent and worthless composition if it is a poem at all. By contrast, *Isabella* is full of 'graceful and felicitous words and images,' which are detectable in almost every stanza and are appropriately expressed. Therefore the poem has a 'grand style' which in the end stands as a mark of Keats's character and conduct. Arnold claims that *Isabella* 'contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles' (665). By contrast, Arnold claims that the ancient writers were virtuous and religious in their own way; their writing displayed a grand and simple style, was full of 'action', 'passion', and 'the great primary human affections' – a much-quoted phrase in books of literary criticism. Throughout his essay-writing career Arnold showed just such ambivalence about Keats's character, as evidenced in his poetry, but nonetheless showed considerable admiration and affection

⁵³⁰ Kenneth Allott, ed., *The Poems of Matthew Arnold* (London and New York: Longman, 1979), 664. Hereafter *Poems of Matthew Arnold*. Further references to Allott's edition will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

for him. In his preface to the second edition of *Poems* (1854), Arnold states that the classical writers of antiquity

. . . can help to cure us of what is, it seems to me, the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals: namely, that it is *fantastic*, and wants *sanity*. Sanity – that is the great virtue of the ancient literature; the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power. It is impossible to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity; and to emulate them we must at least read them. (637)

The 32-year-old critic that he then was took a positive view of Keats as manly and of his poetry as full of noble qualities, because he was enthralled and enamoured by the Greek mythology. This was a view that was to be moderated after the appearance of the love-letters. What he puts forward in his 1865 essay on ‘Maurice de Guérin’⁵³¹ about Keats’s moral character and the sensuousness of his poetry would be taken up in a more restrained, controlled, and succinct form in his 1880 essay, where he concludes his opinions on Keats’s weak and strong points, once and for all. In a sense, the most important passage in the essay on ‘Maurice de Guérin’ is an interpretation or long elaboration of Keats’s ‘Negative Capability’ phrase. Arnold remarks that poetry is the ‘interpretress [*sic*] of the natural world, and . . . the interpretress of the moral world.’⁵³² Poetry, accordingly, interprets ‘with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outward world, and . . . with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man’s moral and spiritual nature’ (33). In other words, poetry must contain

⁵³¹ Delivered on 15 November 1862 as a lecture at Oxford entitled ‘A Modern French Poet’; it was published in January 1863 in *Fraser’s Magazine* and was reprinted in his *Essays in Criticism* (1865). See the short introduction (by Miriam Allott) to the essay in Miriam Allott, ed., *MATHEW ARNOLD: Selected Poems and Prose* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1985), 168. Hereafter *Arnold, P & P*.

⁵³² R. H. Super, ed, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-1977), iii 30. Hereafter *Arnold, Prose Works*. Further references to this edition will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

'*natural magic* . . . [and] *moral profundity*'. Shakespeare is a perfect exemplar in whose writings the naturalistic and moral interpretations balance each other even though sometimes his expressions are 'too little sensuous and simple, too much intellectualised' (33). The perfect natural magic in Keats's poetry, which is 'something genial, outward, and sensuous', overwhelmingly dominates the moral interpretation. When the poet speaks he does so 'like Adam naming by divine inspiration the creatures; . . . [his] expression corresponds with the thing's essential reality' (34). The awareness of the reality of the objects around Keats, the way he deals with them and reconciles himself with the mystery of the universe around him comprise the poet's sense of morality. Arnold gives passages of Maurice de Guérin's writings in which the latter expresses the wonders of empathy and penetration into the essence of the natural world around him. These feelings in de Guérin's work show a remarkable similarity to those of Keats the man (and poet) where, in the letters published in 1848, he elaborates on some of his great themes – the chameleon poet, the pleasure thermometer, negative capability, and empathy. Marquess states that in the opinion of the middle-aged Arnold, Keats had not wrestled much with questions of morality and religion and his early death meant that he did not have sufficient experience of the world.⁵³³ Essentially Arnold is saying in his essay on 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' that poets must first familiarise themselves with the spirit of the contemporary world which would inspire them with ideas to work upon.⁵³⁴ In the first half of the 19th century, England produced

⁵³³ *Lives of the Poet* 69.

⁵³⁴ Arnold, *Prose Works* iii 258-285. The essay was delivered as a lecture at Oxford 29 October 1864 and was published in the *National Review* 1864. It was reprinted in *Essays in Criticism, First Series* (1865). Arnold used the word 'disinterestedness' to mean a poet's dissociation from the political and pragmatic affairs of life (and not mental wrestling with ideas). In the introduction to the essay, Allott states her view that the word has today come to mean 'indifference', a view towards life that modern individuals in England have come to cultivate as habit. The modern use of the word has its roots in Arnold's 'disinterestedness'. *Arnold, P & P* 189.

poets whose work is inferior to that of the Elizabethans, because the Romantic writers wrote at a time when both intellectual and literary criticism was scarce. The Elizabethan poets wrote at the time of the Reformation, which was an intellectual movement. The Romantic writers including Keats wrote at the time of the French Revolution, which was initially an intellectual achievement but soon left its intellectual sphere for that of the political. At least in England, the French Revolution was received as a political phenomenon. Keats should have read literary criticism first so as to nourish his poetical mind with it and then he could have gone on to compose poetry. He did not have enough knowledge of the world. In his essay on 'Heinrich Heine' in *Essays in Criticism*, First Series, Arnold had said that Keats 'passionately gave himself up to a sensuous genius'.⁵³⁵ Entertaining ideas like this, Arnold was prepared to detect a lack of 'conduct' in Keats when Forman's volume was published.

Arnold's essay of 1880 on Keats is the first general assessment of the poet by a major critic to be based on virtually the whole of his poetry and letters.⁵³⁶ In the essay, Arnold tries to show what sort of man Keats was and what his views about art were.⁵³⁷ The essay was originally meant as an introduction prefixed to the Selection from Keats in Ward's *English Poets*, vol. iv, 1880. It reappeared in 1888 in a collection of critical essays entitled *Essays in Criticism* (second series). The essay reveals Arnold's familiarity with the poet's personal history and the reception of his poetry from the time

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.* iii 122. The essay was first delivered as a lecture at Oxford on 13 June 1863. It was published in *Cornhill Magazine* in August 1863 and reprinted in *Essays in Criticism* (1865). *Arnold, P & P* 170.

⁵³⁶ R. H. Super points out that Arnold used a later edition: Lord Houghton, *The Life and Letters of John Keats* (London: Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street, 1867). This was a new edition in one volume. As always, I use the 1848 edition as the source of quotations from Keats's letters or to give samples of Milnes's analysis of the poet's life. *Arnold, Prose Works* ix 393, n.205: 8-9.

⁵³⁷ *Arnold, Prose Works* ix 392.

of the attacks by the Tory reviewers to the publication of Keats's biography by Milnes in 1848 and down to the appearance of the poet's love-letters in 1878 in Buxton Forman's edition. Arnold quotes from at least twenty of Keats's letters to his friends and family and from a few of his love letters to Fanny Brawne in an effort to clarify and confirm Keats's position among the English poets and to shed revealing light on his character. His is a balanced view of Keats the man. The question of Keats's sensuousness resurfaces only to be put in a new perspective and then condemned. Arnold states that sensuousness was an eminent quality in Keats's poetry and that in this he was Miltonic because Milton wished poetry to be 'simple, sensuous, [and] impassioned'.⁵³⁸ He quotes parts of Keats's well-known letters of 22 November 1817 to Bailey⁵³⁹ and 21, 27(?) December 1817 to his brothers⁵⁴⁰ and also Haydon's remarks that Keats once 'covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the delicious coldness of claret in all its glory – his own expression'⁵⁴¹ in order to reiterate his belief that Keats was governed by his senses. He goes on to note that Haydon further remarks, '[Keats] had no decision of character, no object upon which to direct his great powers' (205). Character and self-control are lacking in Haydon's portraiture of Keats, two essential ingredients of greatness that great artists must possess. Following Haydon's lead, Arnold argues that these qualities are certainly lacking in the Keats of the love letters to Fanny Brawne. Moreover, the love letters and Haydon's story of Keats give us an altogether unpleasant impression of

⁵³⁸ Quoted in Arnold, *Prose Works* ix 205. Subsequent references to Arnold's article in the book will be indicated by page numbers in parentheses.

⁵³⁹ 'O for a life of sensation rather than of thoughts!'. *LLLR* i 65 (*Gittings* 37). *Gittings* records, 'O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!'

⁵⁴⁰ '... with a great Poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.' *LLLR* i 94 (*Gittings* 43). *Gittings* has, 'a great poet'.

⁵⁴¹ Quoted in Arnold, *Prose Works* ix 205.

the poet. There was no good reason, in Arnold's view, to publish the love letters. Indeed, their publication appears 'inexcusable'; they should never have been exposed to public gaze (206). To Arnold, the love-letters did not conform to the ideal of character taught by his father of Rugby school. The publication of the love letters, as we have seen, was a temporary blow to perceptions of Keats's character and the gradual rise in poetic fame he had enjoyed from the time of the appearance of Milnes's biography. The revelation of the letters brought certainty to an uncertain Arnold who had swung in his appreciation between submission to the poet's Romantic magic and rejection of his moral insufficiency: it made him believe that Keats the man was lacking in moral values. His appreciation of the poems changed place with his focus on the poet's character. However, the man cannot be easily separated from his work.⁵⁴² Arnold himself would resent the idea that his biography would be published after his death. Keats's physique was vulnerable to 'the throttling and unmanning . . . disease' which he was suffering from when he was writing the love letters (206). The love letter of 13 October 1819 shows that a man who writes in this effeminate mode is 'predestined . . . to misfortune in his love-affairs.' The real point to remark is that he is completely enervated. Keats has abandoned 'all reticence and all dignity' (206). This characterises him as a merely sensuous man who is in Arnold's terms, 'passion's slave'.⁵⁴³ To Arnold, the letters were those of an ill-bred and ill-educated boy whose undecided

⁵⁴² *Lives of the Poet* 70.

⁵⁴³ The quotation is from *Hamlet* III.ii. 76-77. In lines 52-53, Hamlet calls Horatio a well-balanced man:

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

In lines 66-72, Hamlet says that happy are those people whose 'blood [i.e. passions] and judgment' are so blended that they are not pipes in the hands of Fortune to blow them as it likes. Such people as Horatio who are not 'passion's slave' dwell in Hamlet's 'heart's core'. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, eds, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 671.

character could not exert any control over their expression. Such discourse by Arnold is reminiscent of the fiery language of *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* when they derided Keats's poetry and low birth. Keats's love letters are the love letters of a surgeon's apprentice.⁵⁴⁴ They seem to have been written by one who was 'ill brought up'; to be the utterances of a 'surgeon's apprentice . . . in a breach of promise case, or in the Divorce Court.' In consequence, Keats's expressions of selfless love are 'underbred and ignoble' (206-7). The fact that many who are themselves badly bred and badly trained would enjoy the poet's love letters and would even think of them as 'beautiful and characteristic' works of their 'lovely and beloved Keats' does not make them any better. These admirers only do harm to the fame of the poet (207) because they attract the attention of readers to the most questionable part of his character, that is, the feminine Keats of

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair,
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast.⁵⁴⁵

Keats was not all sensuousness as the poem, 'Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair' and his love-letters may indicate. But Arnold did not bother to read the poem carefully to the end or consider its larger meaning. In lines 25-28, the poet thinks of women as possessing 'Such charms [as] with mild intelligences shine,' who have 'divine' voices. As in the case of Mrs Isabella Jones, Keats had a platonic love for the

⁵⁴⁴ On a more positive note, Milnes wrote: '. . . here is a surgeon's apprentice, with the ordinary culture of the middle classes, rivalling in aesthetic perceptions of antique life and thought the most careful scholars of his time and country.' *LLLR* ii 104.

⁵⁴⁵ The opening lines of a sonnet of 1817. *Barnard* 49. Barnard argues that the sonnet is the second stanza of the three-stanza poem, 'Woman! When I behold thee flippant, vain' which was 'probably written March to December 1815' and which seems to have been addressed to the Misses Mathew. It was published in 1817. The poem contains both erotic imagery and feminine feelings. Woodhouse, as quoted by Barnard, remarks, 'when Keats had written . . . lines [31-2: "God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats / For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing"] he burst into tears overpowered by the tenderness of his own imagination (conception)'. *Barnard* 562.

women he met and liked.⁵⁴⁶ ‘. . . mild intelligences shine’ echoes the poet’s writing, in the letter of 14 February-3 May 1819, ‘i[n]telligences are atoms of perception—they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God’.⁵⁴⁷ In the same letter Keats uses the word ‘intelligence’ to mean ‘the *human heart*’ and ‘Mind’ and therefore it not only has associations with imagination and feeling and rationality and thinking, it has also a divine application. In Arnold’s view, Keats was at any rate at least by his promise, if not fully by his performance, one of the ‘very greatest of English poets’ (207). Arnold does not make a distinction between Keats the man and Keats the sensuous poet as he states that a merely ‘sensuous man’ cannot either by promise or by performance be a very great poet, because poetry is an interpretation of life and a merely sensuous man cannot understand the noble part of life. Therefore, there are signs of ‘virtue’⁵⁴⁸ and ‘high character’ in Keats. The poet was constantly engaged in efforts to develop his character. He faced misfortune and disease and time cut short his poetic efforts. Arnold owes his moralization of Keats to Lord Houghton – Richard Monckton Milnes in 1848. He considered Lord Houghton’s portrayal of the character of Keats as ‘full of discrimination’ (207). In an attempt to show aspects of Keats’s masculine character, Arnold quotes George Keats as saying that John was ‘the very soul of manliness and courage, and as much like the Holy Ghost as *Johnny Keats*’ (208).⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ *Motion* 180-81.

⁵⁴⁷ *Gittings* 250-51.

⁵⁴⁸ This is reminiscent of *Blackwood’s* hostile position on Keats’s poetry where it said that such poetry is fit for ‘washerwomen, merchants’ clerks, ladies of easy virtue’. *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, xi (July 1822), 59-60. See pages 27-28 of this thesis for *Blackwood’s* early response to the publication of *Adonais*.

⁵⁴⁹ George Keats’s letter of 20 April 1825; *LLLR* ii 44. George wrote ‘courage and manliness’. *Blackwood’s* spoke of the poet as ‘good Johnny Keats’. Byron did not like Keats’s poetry and his remarks on him had been published in Moore’s *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (1830): ‘Instead of [Scott’s *Monastery*], here are Johnny Keats’s *piss-a-bed* poetry’ and ‘Why do n’t [*sic*] they [the *Edinburgh* Reviewers] review and praise “Solomon’s Guide to Health?” it is better sense, and as much poetry

And, it is not difficult to find letters in which Keats merely talks of virtue and disinterestedness in individuals such as Bailey.⁵⁵⁰ The poet's letter of 23 January 1818 to Bailey in which Keats tries to mediate between the quarrelling Haydon and Reynolds through his affection for both so that the two patch up their differences, vividly exhibits evidences of 'instinct for character, for virtue, passing into the man's life, passing into his work' (208).⁵⁵¹ Arnold's judgements are based squarely on the idea that Keats the man and Keats the poet are not separable. Another proof of character in Keats is that he tried to maintain his independence and self-respect by lessening his financial dependence on Brown. 'I do nothing for my subsistence—make no exertion. At the end of another year you shall applaud me, not for verses, but for conduct' wrote Keats in a letter of 23 September 1819 to Brown.⁵⁵² And Keats's much quoted letter of 9 October 1818, written after the ferocious criticism of his *Endymion*, shows character, strength, and 'clearness of judgment' in the criticism of his own works and his attitude towards the public and literary cliques:

Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict;(209)⁵⁵³

as Johnny Keats' (Letters of 12 October, 18 November, 1820). The latter is quoted in *LLLR* i 205.

⁵⁵⁰ Arnold quotes Keats's letter of 13, 19 January 1818 (misdated as 21 April 1818) to George and Tom Keats as an example. *LLLR* i 105 (*Gittings* 49-50).

⁵⁵¹ *LLLR* i 77 (*Gittings* 53).

⁵⁵² Quoted in Arnold, *Prose Works* ix 209. *Gittings* records slight changes: 'At the end of another year, you shall applaud me,--not for verses, but for conduct.' *LLLR* ii 29 (*Gittings* 300).

⁵⁵³ *LLLR* i 214 (*Gittings* 155).

Keats's letter of 3 October 1819 to Haydon is a confirmation that Keats remained disinterested in character and removed from the criticism or admiration of others:

I have no cause to complain, because I am certain anything really fine will in these days be felt. I have no doubt that if I had written *Othello* I should have been cheered. I shall go on with patience (210).⁵⁵⁴

In Gittings's edition of Keats's letters we read: 'I have no doubt that if I had written *Othello* I should have been cheered by as good as [*sic*] Mob as Hunt.' By omitting 'by as good as Mob as Hunt' – the celebrated political orator on the occasion of the Peterloo Massacre, the man who had staged a grand political procession in London – Milnes tried to remove the political resonance of Keats's comparison and his characterisation of the kind of audience he would be happy to have welcomed his writings. Arnold's use of Milnes's edition of Keats's letters deprived him as it deprived all at the time of seeing into the genuine nature of Keats's response to his reviewers, a mixture of faith in the appeal of truly great writing, and a suspicion of popular applause.

For Arnold, Keats's letter of 22 September 1819 to C. W. Dilke shows that, unlike other young poets, he did not deceive himself into the belief that his poetry had high merits (210);⁵⁵⁵ his letter of 23 August 1819 to John Taylor tells us that he was a strong man and not a weakling who was 'snuff'd out by an article' (210).⁵⁵⁶ Therefore,

⁵⁵⁴ *LLR* ii 10 (*Gittings* 331-332).

⁵⁵⁵ Arnold quotes Keats as saying, 'I have no trust whatever in poetry. I don't wonder at it; the marvel is to me how people read so much of it.' Milnes has, 'on poetry'. Gittings has, 'I have no trust whatever on Poetry—I dont wonder at it—the ma[r]vel it [*for is*] to me how people read so much of it.' *LLR* ii 17-8 (*Gittings* 302).

⁵⁵⁶ The Quotation refers to the last line of Byron's elegiac stanza on Keats's death in 1823 in *Don Juan* (XI.lx): "'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle, / Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.' Keats as quoted by Arnold wrote, 'I shall ever consider the public as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration,

as Milnes and so many others had done, Arnold dismisses Byron's joke that Keats was killed by an article and goes on to delineate the poet's manliness and high character. He had already said plainly in his essay on 'Heinrich Heine' that Keats 'died of consumption at twenty-five'.⁵⁵⁷ The poet's letter of 9 April 1818 to Reynolds is yet further evidence of Keats's independence vis-à-vis the public's admiration and praise (210-211).⁵⁵⁸ Arnold indicates that Byron was among the 'jabberers' who wished Keats an everlasting life to flatter them and be flattered by them. In his letter of 23 August 1819 to Taylor, Keats looks down upon such artistic and literary jabberers (211).⁵⁵⁹

Arnold argues that Keats had 'flint and iron' in him and had 'character'. He was 'as much like the holy ghost as *Johnny Keats*,' but his allegedly sensuous and weak personality was the delight of the literary circles of Hampstead (211).⁵⁶⁰ Byron did not have a clear picture as to Keats's character and did not think much of his poetry. Keats,

which I can do without.' *LLLR* ii 12 (*Gittings* 280). Milnes has, 'I shall now consider them (the people)' *Gittings's* reading is a mixture of Milnes's and Arnold's versions: 'I shall ever consider them (people) as debtors' Perhaps Lord Houghton changed 'now' to 'ever' in his 1867 edition of the biography of Keats (which was consulted by Arnold) after consulting the original wording of the manuscript of Keats's letter.

⁵⁵⁷ Arnold, *Prose Works* iii 122.

⁵⁵⁸ Keats as quoted by Arnold wrote, ' . . . among multitudes of men I have no feel of stooping; I hate the idea of humility to them. I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of thought about their opinion . . . I hate a mawkish popularity. I cannot be subdued before them. My glory would be to daunt and dazzle the thousand jabberers about pictures and books.' *LLLR* i 120-21 (*Gittings* 85). Both Milnes and *Gittings* write, 'shadow of public thought'. 'About their opinion' is or seems to be Arnold's own addition, if the phrase does not exist in the 1867 edition of Lord Houghton's biography.

⁵⁵⁹ ' . . . [I am] exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world Who could wish to be among the commonplace crowd of the little famous, who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves?' *LLLR* ii 13 (*Gittings* 280-281).

⁵⁶⁰ Keats, Shelley, Hunt and other friends met in Hunt's house in the Vale of Health, Hampstead.

on the other hand, shrewdly characterised Byron in his letter of 14 October 1818 to his family in America as a 'fine thing' who dwelt in the sphere of 'the worldly, theatrical, and pantomimical (211).'⁵⁶¹ Keats was clear-sighted and 'lucid' and his lucidity was the sign of his character and of his 'high and severe work' (211). If we take the word lucid in both its senses, then Arnold means to say that Keats was sane and his poetry intelligible. And this assertion directly rebuts Byron's saying that Keats's poetry was 'unintelligible'.⁵⁶² Keats's was a humble soul engaged in toil and trouble, study, and the development of his thought in order to strengthen his poetic powers (211).⁵⁶³ In his manuscript notes written in a copy of *Paradise Lost*, Keats states that 'there was working in him [Milton], as it were, that same sort of thing which operates in the great world to the end of a prophecy's being accomplished' and that he devoted himself more to the 'ardours than the pleasures of song'; the poet sought to think of ideas inspired by the poetical luxury of Milton's poem (212).⁵⁶⁴ He looked into Milton's poems 'like a lover' (212).⁵⁶⁵ For Arnold, Keats's poetry did not include a criticism of life and was not prophetic and though, as the above quotation reveals, Keats yearned for his poetry to be a trumpet of prophecy, he was 'not yet ripe for it'.⁵⁶⁶ He tried to add an element of

⁵⁶¹ *LLLR* i 229-30 (*Gittings* 163).

⁵⁶² Byron said, 'Just as he [Keats] really promised something great, / If not intelligible, -' in his elegiac stanza in 1823 in *Don Juan* (XI.lx).

⁵⁶³ Arnold quotes part of Keats's letter of 24 April 1818 to John Taylor: 'I know nothing, I have read nothing; and I mean to follow Solomon's directions: "Get learning, get understanding." There is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it.' The Bible has 'Get wisdom, get understanding' in Proverbs 4:5. *LLLR* i 129-30 (*Gittings* 88).

⁵⁶⁴ The quotation is from *LLLR* i 274-5.

⁵⁶⁵ Keats's letter of 14 August 1819 to Bailey. *LLLR* ii 11 (*Gittings* 277).

⁵⁶⁶ The Angel Michael's prophetic vision of history delivered to Adam in *Paradise Lost* XI and XII is usually reckoned the principal prophetic part of the poem. Stephen Orgel

philosophical meditation to his poems, as lines 72-74 of *To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.*, vividly confirm. There are signs and marks of high work even in his pursuits of 'the pleasures of song' and this is a sign of affinity with his character, a character that passes through and into his intellectual productions. Indeed, he strove to read and write the 'best sort of poetry' as he tells us in a letter of 24 August 1819 to Reynolds (212).⁵⁶⁷ Strangely, this addiction to the best sort of poetry affects him with a coldness towards the prime object of sensuous and passionate poets, that is, women and love. It is as if Keats exhibited the cold features of a mathematician. Women appeared to him 'as children to whom I would rather give a sugar-plum than my time' (212).⁵⁶⁸ The poet thought that the unpopularity of his poems might be partly due to the 'offence which the ladies take at him' (212).⁵⁶⁹ He showed traits of disinterestedness even in his letters to Fanny Brawne (213).⁵⁷⁰ Arnold shrewdly remarks that Keats's 'yearning passion for the Beautiful'⁵⁷¹ is not the passion of the sensuous or sentimental man or poet. It is an 'intellectual and spiritual passion' (213). In his letter of February 1820 (?) to Fanny Brawne, Keats remarks that he has 'loved the principle of beauty in all things'. Arnold argues that the poet made himself remembered – as not merely a sensuous poet – by

and Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *John Milton: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 580-618.

⁵⁶⁷ *LLR* ii 15 (*Gittings* 282).

⁵⁶⁸ Letter of 14-31 October 1818 to his family in America. *LLR* i 235-6 (*Gittings* 170).

⁵⁶⁹ Milnes has, 'offence the ladies take at me'. Letter of August (?) 1820 to Charles Brown. *LLR* ii 67 (*Gittings* 391).

⁵⁷⁰ Letter of 16 August 1819 to Fanny Brawne: 'I know the generality of women would hate me for this; that I should have so unsoftened, so hard a mind as to forget them; forget the brightest realities for the dull imaginations of my own brain. . . . My heart seems now made of iron—' *LJKFB* 25 (*Gittings* 278).

⁵⁷¹ From Keats's letter of 4 - 31 October 1818 to his family in America. Milnes wrote, 'the yearning passion I have for the Beautiful.' *Gittings* records 'Passion' and 'beautiful'. *LLR* i 236 (*Gittings* 171).

having 'loved the principle of beauty in all things' (213).⁵⁷² For Keats, to see things in their beauty was to see the truth in things; 'What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth' said Keats in his letter of 22 November 1817 to Bailey (213).⁵⁷³ This idea is famously expressed in the concluding lines of the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn': 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, --that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' Arnold asserts the contrary, that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' is not all we know, and it is not all we need to know, but it is deeply true that 'we have deep need to know it.' To the association of beauty and truth the third element of joy must be added, because in Keats's opinion, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' (213).⁵⁷⁴ Keats had a 'great spirit' precisely because of his high perception of the necessary relation of beauty with truth and of the two with joy. Keats's letter of 22 November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey shows us, the poet led a life of dignity and glory that was akin to one of happiness (214).⁵⁷⁵ However, his letter of 24 August 1819 to Reynolds shows that consuming disease and 'Fortune' were his terrible bafflers (214).⁵⁷⁶ And his letter of 1 November 1820 to Charles Brown indicates that he was saddened and deeply disappointed with the bleak and blind powers of fortune; although at the same time, there was an increasing and mighty thought in his mind that looked for better health and for favourable

⁵⁷² Letter of February (?) 1820 to Fanny Brawne. *LJKFB* 57 (*Gittings* 361).

⁵⁷³ *LLR* i 64 (*Gittings* 37).

⁵⁷⁴ *Endymion* I 1.

⁵⁷⁵ Keats wrote, 'Nothing startles me beyond the moment, the setting sun will always set me to rights, or if a sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.' This important letter glosses Keats's 'Negative Capability' and 'Pleasure thermometer', terms that elucidate his views on poetry and the feelings of the poet when he is involved in the actual composition of a poem. *LLR* i 67 (*Gittings* 38).

⁵⁷⁶ '... I feel my body too weak to support me to the height; I am obliged continually to check myself, and be nothing'. *LLR* ii 15 (*Gittings* 282).

circumstances and days. Arnold sees these qualities as the source of Keats's inadequacy, incompleteness, and partial achievement (214).⁵⁷⁷

In his essay, Arnold first acclaims then condemns Keats's 'sensuousness', which was not necessarily a negative quality in his previous assessment of the poet. The passionate surrender of Keats the man in the love-letters, however, evidently made Arnold think twice. If in 1853, Arnold had called Haydon a 'false *butcher*' for having said that Keats was a sensuous poet killed by reviewers, in his 1880 essay he delivers Haydon's remarks again without informing the reader of his source. The favourable image of Keats as a sensuous author gives place to a 'merely sensuous man' who wrote the letters to Fanny Brawne. It seems clear that Arnold's reaction to Forman's book is based as much on social considerations as on intrinsic merits. Arnold had said in his essay on 'Maurice de Guérin' that Keats had less 'moral profundity' than sensuous 'natural magic'; the letters to Fanny Brawne made him revise his assertion. Because Keats said to Fanny that his creed was love and that Fanny was its 'only tenet', Arnold concluded that Keats's love-letter is the love-letter of a 'surgeon's apprentice'. He refers to Keats in relation to this letter as a 'sensuous man of a badly bred and badly trained sort'. In short, the love-letters showed that Keats was not a gentleman because, socially speaking, he did not possess the dignified and reserved conduct of a gentleman when expressing love for Fanny. He surrendered himself slavishly to her charm. For Marquess, Arnold's new standpoint vis-à-vis Keats's moral character is 'outright snobbery'.⁵⁷⁸ And it is difficult not to see in such remarks a strong element of social distinction, at least.

⁵⁷⁷ 'O that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit'. *LLLR* ii 78 (*Gittings* 397).

⁵⁷⁸ *Lives of the Poet* 72.

Arnold, writing in his vein of Victorian moral seriousness, believed that 'conduct is three-fourths of human life' and that Keats the lover lacked the gentlemanly virtues of 'character and self-control', which were requirements for 'every kind of greatness'. Arnold's 1880 essay on Keats did more damage to Keats's fame. The image of a badly-bred, self-indulgent, and morally dubious young poet was formulated in terms appropriate to two generations later. Arnold always expressed his disappointment with *Endymion* and was of the view that Keats's perfection is to be found in his shorter pieces, in his odes, in his lyrics, and in his sonnets. He gives to Keats the same rank as to Shakespeare as regards the intuitive understanding of human nature or what may be called 'natural magic' (214). Keats ranks with Shakespeare also by virtue of his feeling for beauty and in his poetic expression. But all in all he ranks below Shakespeare as a writer. In his short life, Keats did not manage to possess that capacity for moral interpretation of experience. Nor did he yet have that eye for the 'architectonics of poetry', which is needed for the development of great works like *Agamemnon* or *King Lear*. Keats's long works such as *Endymion* and *Hyperion* are not completely successful though the latter contains fine things. Arnold's small selection from Keats in Ward's *English Poets*, vol. iv, 1880, contains selected lines from *I Stood Tip-Toe* ('Endymion', 193-204; 'Cynthia's Bridal Evening', 215-38), *Endymion* ('Beauty', I, 1-24; 'Hymn to Pan', I, 279-292; 'Bacchus', IV, 193-203), *Hyperion* ('Saturn', I, 1-51; 'Coelus to Hyperion', I, 309-57; 'Oceanus', II, 167-243; 'Hyperion's Arrival', II, 346-78), and *The Eve of St. Agnes* ('The Flight', last eighteen stanzas) and includes 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Bards of Passion and of Mirth', 'To Autumn', 'Lines on the Mermaid Tavern', 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', 'Written in January, 1817' ('After dark vapours have oppressed our plains'), 'Written in January, 1818' ('When I have fears that I may cease to be'),

'Addressed to Haydon' ('Great spirits now on earth are sojourning'), 'On the Grasshopper and Cricket', 'The Human Seasons', 'On a Picture of Leander', 'Keats's Last Sonnet' ('Bright star!'), and lines 71-111 from *Epistle to My Brother George*: 'The Bard Speaks'.⁵⁷⁹ His selection was meant to represent the poet's high character from his best poetry, an issue which he deals with in his essay on the poet.

For Arnold, the matured power of moral interpretation and high architectonics are not required in shorter pieces. Arnold is ready to admit that these shorter pieces have in their expression that 'rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness of which Shakespeare is the great master' (215). Many now would believe, on the contrary, that Keats's fine odes do reveal both the matured power of moral interpretation and high architectonics because of their skilfully constructed form. 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', and the 'Ode on Melancholy', to take only three examples, have been recognised as carrying deep moral insight. Arnold claims, at the end of the essay, that he has tried to depict the character of Keats the man and the relationship between such a character and his works. If the reviewers of Milnes were at pains to try to show that Keats exhibited Shakespearian qualities, Arnold is perhaps the first critic who firmly ranks Keats in a category that includes Shakespeare. Marquess thinks that in Arnold's estimation, Keats would have ranked with Shakespeare if the surgeon's apprentice had been properly bred and educated.⁵⁸⁰ That is perhaps to judge Arnold too severely, because his criteria for greatness are not all socially-driven.

⁵⁷⁹ Thomas Humphry Ward, ed., *The English Poets*, 5 vols (London: Macmillan And Co., 1880-1894), iv 438- 464.

⁵⁸⁰ *Lives of the Poet* 71-72.

To conclude, perhaps the most remarkable thing about Arnold's essay on Keats is that he contrives to marginalize the sensational and revealing documents that had come to light two years previously. Shelley distinguishes in *A Defence of Poetry* between the poet as poet and the poet as man. He states that a great poet may not necessarily be a good person in the eyes of society:

Let us assume that Homer was a drunkard, that Virgil was a flatterer, that Horace was a coward, that Tasso was a madman, that Lord Byron was a peculator, that Raphael was a libertine, that Spenser was a poet Laureate. It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but Posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins "were as scarlet, they are now white as snow"; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and the redeemer Time.⁵⁸¹

Arnold does not accept this distinction. He puts aside the love-letters of Keats as he does not believe that the feminine and sentimental Keats of the letters to Fanny Brawne can be a great poet who ranked with Shakespeare. His estimate of Keats is based on a simple principle taken as axiomatic: that sensuousness alone is not sufficient to create a great poet; 'virtue' and 'character' must also be present. He seems also to assume that these qualities are the result of breeding and training 'which teaches us that we must put some constraint upon our feelings and upon the expression of them' (206). These acquirements necessarily control the expression of feeling. Evidently Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne are written without constraint or self-control; so Arnold undertakes the exercise of trying to find in Keats's other letters evidence of sufficient virtue and character to counterbalance the sensuous feeling. He finds this evidence in the letter of 23 January 1818 to Bailey (208-9), letter of 23 September 1819 to Brown (209), letter of 9 October 1818 to Hessey (209-10), letter of 3 October 1819 to Haydon (210), letters of 24 April 1818 and 23 August 1819 to Taylor (211), and of 14 August 1819 to Bailey (212), from amongst many letters that he quotes from. Arnold feels

⁵⁸¹ *P and P* 506.

Keats wrote a 'beautiful preface to *Endymion*' (211). He had in mind Keats's saying that the preface 'is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honours of English literature.'⁵⁸² When Keats stated that Milton 'devoted himself rather to the ardour than the pleasures of song', he meant that Milton entertained and enjoyed the intellectual and philosophical aspects of poetry. In this regard, Keats is like his own conception of Milton, and that requires character. His passion for the Beautiful in poetry or in life was an intellectual passion. All in all, Arnold bases his judgement of Keats's character on the letters. He deplors the letters to Fanny Brawne. He finds in the others evidence of Keats the man as virtuous and of strong character. Therefore, he also finds that what Keats did well in poetry he did well because of his qualities as a man. The letters have thus served as the moral justification of Arnold's admiration for those of Keats's poems that he admired. The qualities of the man and those of the poems are essentially linked. But this judgement is arrived at by, in effect, dismissing the letters to Fanny Brawne that were written when Keats was ill as the productions of disease and despair; and for the one to her that Arnold quotes that was written before Keats felt ill, Arnold finds compensating qualities elsewhere in the correspondence. The intense and consuming feelings of the love letters, therefore, he either excuses as aberrant or dilutes with other qualities. Above all, Arnold uses the letters to discover in Keats the man those characteristics that he considers necessary in the artist to produce admirable art. The letters certainly provide evidence of admirable personal traits; whether these are the cause or the necessary condition of great poetry is perhaps impossible to decide. But Arnold's detailed critical scrutiny of the letters serves a powerful argument which establishes them as essential documents for any further estimate of Keats the artist.

⁵⁸² Preface to *Endymion* in *Stillinger* 102.

III

SWINBURNE ON KEATS'S POETRY, LETTERS, AND CHARACTER

In the preface to his book *Miscellanies*, Swinburne sets out some important critical principles that he takes as fundamental to the discussion and analysis of any literary work. He first remarks that an admirable man and an admirable poet are not the same thing. In this respect he adopts the point of view of Shelley in the *A Defence of Poetry*. Nevertheless, an Englishman who believes in the independence of English poetry, heritage, and traditions may not accept these poets as prophets or respectable teachers.⁵⁸³ 'All belief involves or implies a corresponding disbelief' and to recognise the greatness of a poet is to identify work that commands 'belief', something more than literary appreciation, something more like religious conviction (v-vi). Critical controversy is stirred in Swinburne's challenge to Arnold's estimates of the relative merits of Byron and Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge. This promises an interesting confrontation on the fifth of those who were in the process of being canonised as the indisputably major poets of the Romantic period, Keats, on whom Arnold had recently published an influential essay.⁵⁸⁴ Keats's merits and place among the English poets

⁵⁸³ Preface to Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Miscellanies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1886), vi. Hereafter *Miscellanies*. Subsequent references to the book will be indicated with page numbers in parentheses.

⁵⁸⁴ In a letter of 10 October 1879 to Edmund Gosse, Swinburne states that he would prefer to read Arnold's essay on Keats rather than write one on the poet himself. Nevertheless, in a humorous remark on Arnold's preparations for a selection from Keats for Ward's *English Poets* (1880), he maintains:

I only hope—but of this I gravely doubt—that his selection, and above all his arrangement of the selected poems, will be such as I should agree was the best and (to use his own favourite epithet) the most adequate possible. The prefatory essay is sure to be most exquisite reading—

were debated in Swinburne's 1882 essay on Keats, which I will analyse shortly. The critic's judgments are intense and dramatic. He praises to the skies what he finds excellent, damns to the lowest pit what he feels is poor. With regard to Shelley he says, 'I can only conclude that as surely as there has seldom been a poet of greater or of equal genius, so surely has there seldom been a critic of greater or of equal imbecility.' Swinburne judges Arnold 'an exquisite and original poet' who, unlike Shelley, explained the inexplicable; yet this 'distinguished living poet and critic, theologian and philosopher' suffered from 'the erratic and eccentric vehemence of misjudgment.' (viii) In Swinburne's view, a critical estimate of an author is bound to take 'into full and fair account the circumstances of time and accident which affected for better or for worse the subjects of our moral or critical sentence.' (x) There is thus a combination of subtle distinction on biographical matters, religious fervour, and historical relativism in Swinburne's manifesto of his critical creed.

Swinburne's familiarity with Keats goes back to the year 1851, when he read Keats's poems for the first time.⁵⁸⁵ In his essay on 'William Blake' written between 1862 and 1865, Swinburne, referring to Milnes's life of Keats, calls the poet a 'perfect' man.⁵⁸⁶ In 1859 or 1860, he composed his own version of *Hyperion* and in 1866, considered editing a small volume of Keats's verse for Moxon.⁵⁸⁷ Throughout his life,

Cecil Y. Lang, ed., *The Swinburne Letters*, 6 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-1962), iv 105. Hereafter *The Swinburne Letters*.

⁵⁸⁵ Georges Lafourcade, *Swinburne's Hyperion and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), 25. Hereafter *Lafourcade*. Further references to Lafourcade's book will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

⁵⁸⁶ Quoted in *Lives of the Poet* 67.

⁵⁸⁷ In a letter of 5 January 1866 to J. B. Payne, Swinburne wrote, 'with regard to the Keats [selection] I shall enjoy doing it of all things as [*sic*] you propose As I know Keats by heart I could write down my proposed selections in order without reference to his works.' *The Swinburne Letters* i 148-9. He abandoned the idea of editing Keats's

he admired Keats's genius. He knew about Keats by reading Milnes's *LLLR* and his later memoirs of the poet; his admiration for Keats was limited to the degree of his knowledge of Keats's character and personal life. Like Arnold, after the publication of the love-letters, Swinburne criticises what Keats the man was in comparison with what he should have been. There are passages that show Swinburne's more or less favourable analysis and criticism of Keats's character prior to the publication of Forman's book and Arnold's 1880 essay. In his essay on 'Théophile Gautier', composed *circa* 1862 and privately printed in 1915, Swinburne wrote, in his first published reference to Keats, that 'there is a clearer air of health [in 'Théophile'] which Keats has not: a greater poet is visible in his letters and a sicklier man.'⁵⁸⁸ As we shall see, after the publication of the letters to Fanny Brawne, Swinburne's view of Keats's poems is slightly moderated as it follows the general condemnation of his early poetry and appreciation of the poems of the 1820 volume, while he lets his outcry against Keats the man's sensuality become public. In a review of Arnold's *New Poems* (1867), Swinburne states that Keats was far more gifted than the French writer Arnold had compared him with, Maurice de Guérin, because 'in Keats there was something of the spirit and breath of the world, of the divine life of things'⁵⁸⁹ Swinburne gradually moved away from Keats's pictorial merits and left aside his Pre-Raphaelite sympathies. He came to despise Keats's poetry on the grounds that it lacked moral and intellectual substance; and so he complained that Keats's poetry was not prophetic.⁵⁹⁰ The first part of his 1881 essay on Keats, written for the fourteenth volume of the *Encyclopaedia*

poems in 1866 but, as we read in his letter of 23 May 1870 to W. M. Rossetti, helped Rossetti with his edition of the poetical works of Keats, which was published in 1870. *The Swinburne Letters* ii 113.

⁵⁸⁸ Quoted in *Lafourcade* 29

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 32.

⁵⁹⁰ *Lives of the Poet* 67.

Britannica (published in 1882), contains scathing criticism of certain passages of *Endymion* and targets Keats as a feminine boy, views which in their way echo the ferocious language of the critiques by *Blackwood's* and *The Quarterly* of Keats's 1817 and 1818 volumes.⁵⁹¹ In the article, Swinburne is more critical and analytical than descriptive of Keats's character and poems. His phrases are terse and his style dense and his language is persuasive and resourceful, partly because he was writing a short article for *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and partly because he had the benefit of Arnold's experience (who had himself sought to discover some substance and morality in Keats) by reading his 1880 essay⁵⁹² -- and partly because he himself now had, for the first time, the complete works of Keats before him.

⁵⁹¹ A. C. S., 'KEATS', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, 1882. There is no difference between Swinburne's essay on Keats for the 1882 ed. of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and a later version in his *Miscellanies* (1886). Here I make use of Swinburne's book as the source for my references to the essay because it contains a preface, which as we have seen, is important for our arguments and critical judgement concerning the debates in the essay. The short postscript to the essay in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is an outline of major events in Keats's life and a reference to Milnes's 1848 biography and Forman's 1878 edition of the poet's love-letters. Subsequent references to the article in the book will be indicated by page numbers in parentheses.

⁵⁹² Swinburne and Arnold did not think alike with regard to Keats's poetic achievement and character in his letters. The way they developed their arguments in their essays was very different. In a letter of 8 March 1881 to T. S. Baynes, Swinburne says:

You will see that I partly agree and partly differ with Mr. Arnold's estimate. My own view, for better and for worse, has not been arrived at without careful consideration based on long and intimate study of the poet and the man, as also of his relations alike with friends and foes. I shall not be surprised if objection is taken in some quarters to the force and freedom with which I have given expression to my opinion, now in praise, now in blame.

The Swinburne Letters vi 282. Arnold dedicates only a few lines of the closing part of his essay to a discussion of Keats's poems as the bulk of the essay shows his concern with Keats's character. Swinburne quotes many of Keats's poems from his 1817-1820 volumes, from the beginning to the end of his essay, to support his arguments concerning the poet's manliness and manhood; he does not seek to prove or disprove Keats's virtue and morality.

Swinburne goes to extremes in his praise or condemnation of Keats's works. He considered that 'Ode to a Nightingale' was 'one of the final masterpieces of human work in all time and for all ages'; the world has never seen lovelier lyrical poems than Keats's 'To Autumn', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Psyche', and 'Ode on Melancholy', nor can it ever possibly see better ones, whereas some of Keats's early poems are 'the most vulgar and fulsome doggerel ever whimpered by a vapid and effeminate rhymester in the sickly stage of whelphood.' (211 and 216) The words 'manhood', 'manliness', and 'man' appear several times in the text of the article and each conveys its own special meaning according to the local context. Because he detects obscene passages in *Endymion*, such as where the shepherd 'exchanges fulsome and liquorish endearments with the "known unknown *from whom his being sips such darling (!) essence*"' Swinburne sympathises somewhat with the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's*, and he feels that Shelley too in his *Adonais* questioned 'the writer's manhood' (212). He judged that Keats's love-letters and his last wailings and expressions of agony should never have been published; but the fact that they were not intended to be published, does not mean that Keats should not have written them at all (212).⁵⁹³ For Swinburne, as for Arnold and many others such as Tennyson, the love-letters stood as a test of their own personal feelings. For Swinburne, the letters show the howling and snivelling of a 'manful kind of man or even a manly sort of boy, in his love-making or in his suffering . . . after such a lamentable fashion.' (212) Therefore, the publication of Forman's little book dropped Keats's status from the affectionately manly hero of Milnes's biography and 1860s 'perfect' man of Swinburne to Swinburne's later portrayal of him as a man who rarely gave 'proof of a manly devotion

⁵⁹³ As mentioned earlier, Keats did not mean to publish the love-letters but joked in letter XXXI of Forman's volume: 'I had nothing particular to say today, but not intending that there shall be any interruption to our correspondence (which at some future time I propose offering to Murray) I write something.' *LJKFB* 84 (*Gittings* 370).

and rational sense of duty to his art', in 1882 (214). Swinburne's change of opinion vis-à-vis Keats's character is because of his recourse to biographical information, embodied in the contents of the letters, as the key to judge and interpret Keats's poetry. In other words, he sees Keats's biography in the letters, which was reminiscent of his own unhappy adolescent life. Lafourcade remarks that the fact that both Swinburne and Arnold believed that Keats had abandoned self-restraint and control in his expressions of love, has its roots in their education. This 'manly' attitude was taken up 'by generations of muscular, Eton-trained scholars throughout the nineteenth century' who believed that Keats, an untrained poet of East London, did not write love-letters in the style and manner of a gentleman; he did not love and did not die like a gentleman⁵⁹⁴. Fanny Brawne's remarks, as quoted incompletely by Sir Charles Dilke in 1875, that the best service to Keats's fame and reputation was to leave him in the obscurity and oblivion to which unfavourable circumstances had condemned him are justified as long as we read Keats in his love-letters only, says Swinburne. The Keats of the letters to friends and acquaintances was made of sterner stuff. Indeed, 'his correspondence with his friends and their general evidence to his character give more sufficient proof than perhaps we might have derived from the general impression left on us by his works.'

(212) There are two important issues involved here: first, Swinburne looks at Keats's

⁵⁹⁴ Lafourcade 53. Modern critics and scholars have tried to resort to biographical information in order to justify Swinburne's fervour in looking for masculine energy in Keats's love-letters. George Ford asserted that Swinburne wanted to affirm his own masculinity by his condemnation of Forman's book, because he was physically small. *Keats and the Victorians* 169. Mario Praz pointed out that there was an anxious desire in Swinburne to appear masculine and he was very sensitive about this issue. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, translated from the Italian by Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 238. When Swinburne was a little child, Praz informs us, his little girl cousins called him 'Cousin Hadji' because he had a delicate build. Clearly, he was also bullied by the same little girls. As Rikky Rooksby has it, in another instance, when his family disagreed with his joining the army, he climbed the dangerous Culver Cliff to assert his masculine energy. The obsession with manliness was implicated with sexual particularities in him that were further developed by his education at Eton. Rikky Rooksby, *A. C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 40-44. Hereafter *Swinburne: A Poet's Life*.

letters in their entirety and comes to the conclusion that those letters published by Milnes in 1848 have great value in themselves as they shed light on many of his poems; these letters give us a wider perspective as to how interpret and read Keats's poems; second, the letters reveal that Keats had character, a rare thing in many of his poems. Both Arnold and Swinburne refer to Keats's letters in *LLR* and the preface to *Endymion* as documents that attest to the poet's manliness (212-3). Letter XVIII in *LJKFB*, shows that Keats was 'something of a man' (213) because in it he said to Fanny, 'I will not indulge or pain myself by complaining of my long separation from you. God alone knows whether I am destined to taste of happiness with you.'⁵⁹⁵ Keats lived long enough only to give 'promise of being a man' (213). In this context, Swinburne intends by Keats's manliness to indicate maturity as opposed to mere corporeal strength and masculine energy.

The last paragraph of the essay is devoted to an appreciation of Keats's poetical gift and genius. In Swinburne's view, Lord Houghton and Matthew Arnold are the two admirers who have done the best service to the memory of Keats. In a letter of 13 January 1877 to the editor of the *Athenaeum*, Swinburne wrote that Houghton 'has utterly cleared and vindicated his [Keats's] memory for ever from the pitiful and shameful imputation of such miserable weakness as could suffer or succumb under the assault or the insult of nameless or unmentionable enemies.'⁵⁹⁶ Because of the literary efforts of Houghton and Arnold:

Keats, on high and recent authority, has been promoted to a place beside Shakespeare; and it was long since remarked by some earlier critic of

⁵⁹⁵ *LJKFB* 59 (*Rollins* ii 264).

⁵⁹⁶ *The Swinburne Letters* iii 261-2.

less note that as a painter of flowers his touch had almost a Shakespearian felicity. (216-7)

Swinburne may well be making a discreet allusion to himself here, or at least to a critical exchange in which he was involved. 'I quite agree with you about Keats, whom I put next to Shakespeare (if I may not say, beside him) as a flower singer' wrote Swinburne in a letter of 6 January 1880 to Henry Arthur Bright.⁵⁹⁷ The final and absolute criterion of Keats's greatness as a poet is a gift of vision and verbal mastery which puts him in a category that includes the other two great Romantic poets, Coleridge and Shelley (and thus Swinburne challenges, as he does in the preface to his *Miscellanies*, Arnold's preference in which Wordsworth is superior to Coleridge and Byron to Shelley).

Even though Swinburne thinks that Keats of the love-letters was unmanly, he rejects Byron's quip that Keats died because of the ferocious criticism of his poetry in an article and plays down the role of the adverse criticism of his poetry in the deterioration of his welfare. Arnold and Houghton have 'clearly seen and shown us the manhood of the man' by clearing Keats of the pity (Shelley) and the ribaldry (Byron) which each assumed as a defence from the attacks by *Blackwood's*; by replacing the false Keats with the true one (largely by references to Keats's letters); such a genius as Swinburne celebrates could not have been such a man as *Blackwood's* attacked. So Swinburne, like Arnold, subscribes to the view that greatness in poetry must proceed from the human greatness of the poet (218). Before the publication of the love-letters in 1878 and Arnold's acclaimed essay of 1880 on Keats, Swinburne did not show a strong reaction to or any alert awareness of the abundant sensuality and sensuousness in Keats's 1817 and 1818 works. He conspicuously despises the publication of Keats's

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.* iv 122.

love-letters though he does not condemn their being written at all. The interesting thing about Swinburne's method of rejecting the love-letters is that, unlike Arnold, he points his finger of criticism at Harry Buxton Forman who, he asserts, committed a crime by printing them. He does not refer to Forman by name in his essay on Keats but he does so in the four sonnets that later he wrote on the publication of the love-letters, by referring to their editor as 'foreman'.

In 1884, Swinburne published *A Midsummer Holiday And Other Poems* in which he included four sonnets under the general title 'In Sepulcretis' (In the Cemetery) – originally published as 'Post Mortem' in January 1884, in the *Fortnightly Review* – in repudiation of the appearance of Forman's edition of Keats's love-letters and as a defence of Keats's privacy. As one of the epigraphs to the sonnets he sets line three of Catullus's epigram LIX: 'vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cenam'⁵⁹⁸ ([whom] you've seen snatching dinner from the funeral pyre itself). The single line suggests that profit is being stolen without any regard to the respect owing to the dead. This is the equivalent of Sir Charles Dilke's remark in the *Athenaeum* (Feb. 16, 1878) that Forman's publishing the love-letters is like a comrade's picking the pocket of a dead soldier on the battlefield. In each case propriety and honourable behaviour are grossly violated out of a desire for gain. The full poem translated into modern colloquial English reads:

Bononian Rufa sucks Rutilus off,
the wife of Menenius, whom you have often seen
in graveyards snatching her dinner right off the funeral pyre,
running after a loaf that has rolled out of the fire
and getting banged by the stubbly cremator.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 6 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904), vi 85. Hereafter *Poems of Swinburne*.

⁵⁹⁹ John Godwin, ed., *Catullus: The Shorter Poems* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1999), 83. Hereafter *Catullus: The Shorter Poems*. The entire text, which is present in Swinburne's collection for those learned enough to know the original poem or those with the energy to look it up (Swinburne conveniently provides the precise reference), reads:

The stanza starts and ends with two scenes of a sexual nature: Rufa's extramarital affairs with Rufus, and with a badly-shaved cremator in the graveyard. Rufa performs fellatio on Rufus and she consents to sex with the cremator in order to be able to steal food from the burning pyre. John Godwin comments that 'vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cenam' indicates that her theft in front of a large audience ('saepe . . . vidistis') is an act of sacrilege and injustice to the helpless dead because the dead will need to live on food in the underworld according to Roman belief and practice.⁶⁰⁰ There are two types of audience here, imagined persons who have been present at such scenes often and the reader who is perusing Catullus's verse and therefore is an imaginative voyeur. Swinburne implies strongly that the publication of Keats's love letters by Forman has two scandalous effects: the publication should be regarded as an act of sacrilege to Keats's high fame, to a poet who like the corpse in the poem is not alive to defend himself; Forman (like the adventurous and carnally-inclined Rufa) aims at gaining a living by taking away and publishing, without Keats's consent, the private love-letters of the poet. The epigram is coarse and obscene like a personal insult scrawled on a wall. In fact Quinn gives examples of actual graffiti containing similar sentiments: 'Rufa ita uale, quare bene felas,' 'Saluia felat Antioeu luscus,' and 'Ionas cum Fileto hic fellat'.⁶⁰¹ The effect is to debase the act that Forman has committed by comparing it to

Bononiensis Rufa Rufulum fellat
 uxor Meneni, saepe quam in sepulcretis
 vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cenam,
 cum devolutum ex igne prosequens panem
 ab semiraso tunderetur ustore.

Kenneth Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998), 33. Hereafter Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems*.

⁶⁰⁰ *Catullus: The Shorter Poems* 181.

⁶⁰¹ Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* 262.

the behaviour of the shameless Rufa and the degrading sexual practice that has made her notorious ('saepe quam . . . vidistis'), suggesting that Foreman's editorial labours have repeated the outrage he has committed on Keats's memory. To elaborate on this epigraph and render its intent explicit, Swinburne prints the following quotation from Heine,

To publish even one line of an author which he himself has not intended for the public at large—especially letters which are addressed to private persons—is to commit a despicable act of felony.⁶⁰²

In his essay on 'Heinrich Heine' in *Essays in Criticism*, First Series (1865), Arnold referred to Heine as 'a brilliant, a most effective soldier in the Liberation War of humanity.'⁶⁰³ He identified Heine as the great modern German writer after Goethe: 'on Heine, of all German authors who survived Goethe, incomparably the largest portion of Goethe's mantle fell.'⁶⁰⁴ The reason why he thinks this is true is precisely because Heine did one thing that authors such as Wordsworth, Scott, Keats, Byron, and Shelley did not; the works of these authors '. . . have this defect, - they do not belong to that which is the main current of the literature of modern epochs, they do not apply modern ideas to life.'⁶⁰⁵ Therefore, Arnold regards Heine as that highest kind of writer who translates into imaginative literature the central modern currents of ideas of his epoch. In his elegy, 'Heine's Grave'⁶⁰⁶, Arnold praises Heine and shows pity for his dreadfully painful final illness. But he also notes his bitterness and sarcasm as faults which limit

⁶⁰² *Poems of Swinburne* vi 85.

⁶⁰³ Arnold, *Prose Works* iii 107. See footnote 535 for the history of the publication of the essay.

⁶⁰⁴ Arnold, *Prose Works* iii 108.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.* iii 122.

⁶⁰⁶ *Poems of Matthew Arnold* 507-517.

his greatness as a poet, though he finishes by reaffirming his vital connection to 'The Spirit of the world' (l. 206). Swinburne knew of Arnold's essay which had been published for the first time in *Cornhill Magazine* in August 1863. Thus, in his epigraph, he attaches the authority of the modern German writer to the conventions of privacy that he insists that Forman has violated. He uses Heine and by implication Arnold's judgment of Heine as one of the greatest writers of the age, as a stick to beat Forman with. Taken together, the two epigraphs from Catullus and Heine join the scurrilous to high critical authority, a potent and heterogeneous mixture.

In choosing to write a series of sonnets to express his indignation at Forman's publication of Keats's letters, Swinburne was adopting the poetic form which the practice of Petrarch and Shakespeare and other Elizabethan sonneteers had defined as the proper one for two great themes – love and immortality achieved through verse. The sonnet form was especially appropriate for Swinburne's purpose because Keats had himself used it for both the themes. In 'When I have fears that I may cease to be' which was included in the poet's letter of 31 January 1818 to Reynolds⁶⁰⁷, Keats is concerned with the anxiety of unfulfilled love ('fair creature of an hour!'), and the fear of never attaining fame ('and think / Till love and fame to nothingness do sink'). He combines the themes of erotic love, of literary fame as an antidote to the ravages of time. Miriam Allott remarks that Keats had marked Shakespeare's sonnets⁶⁰⁸ 12 ('When I do count the clock that tells the time') and 107 ('Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul') in his copy of Shakespeare's *Poems* (1806 edn).⁶⁰⁹ In this latter sonnet along with sonnets

⁶⁰⁷ *LLR* i 83.

⁶⁰⁸ *Shakespeare: Complete Works* 751-770.

⁶⁰⁹ Miriam Allott, *The Poems of John Keats* (London: Longman, 1970), 297. Hereafter Allott, *Poems of Keats*.

18 ('Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?') which guarantees the immortality of the beloved, 19 ('Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws') and 55 ('Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme'), Shakespeare further contrasts the fame of Kings and that of poets. Milton's 'On Shakespeare' celebrates the bard as the 'Dear son of memory, great heir of fame' (l. 5) who '. . . so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie, / That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.' (ll. 15-6)⁶¹⁰ Keats's concern for a fame that is earned by poetry is dealt with as a general theme in the letters. '. . . I shall be among the English Poets after my death,'⁶¹¹ he wrote in the letter of 14-31 October 1818 to his family in America. Georgina was at the time pregnant with a child and in a comment on his lullaby for the child, "'Tis the witching hour of night', given in the letter, Keats wishes to see one of his brother's children 'be the first American Poet' to stand in the succession of great poets. The child will be 'a Poet evermore' (l. 32):

Bard art thou completely!
 Little Child
 O' the western wild
 Bard art thou completely!—
 Sweetly, with dumb endeavour.—
 A Poet now or never!
 Litt[l]e Childe
 O' the western wild
 A Poet now or never!⁶¹² (ll. 48-56)

The quotation, 'the witching time of night,' is from *Hamlet* III.ii.378. Hamlet is preparing to go to see his mother but the darkness of the night lends an element of bewilderment and confusion as to the appropriate yet sarcastic language he will adopt to speak to her. In the setting of Keats's poem, night is made bright with: 'Orbed is the

⁶¹⁰ John Carey, *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems* (London and New York: Longman, 1997), 126-127. Hereafter *Milton: Shorter Poems*.

⁶¹¹ *LLR* i 227 (*Gittings* 161).

⁶¹² *LLR* i 233-4 (*Gittings* 165-6). *Gittings* has, "'Tis 'the witching time of night'".

Moon and bright' and 'the Stars they glisten, glisten' because he prophesies the birth of a would-be poet in the house of a blood-relative, a 'breed, to brave him [Time]' when the poet shall have perished. I shall discuss other poems of Keats, which reflect his anxieties about fame in the coming pages.

Swinburne's fierce attack on Forman as editor of the love-letters can be understood in part in the context of some of his own recent poetry. It would seem that Swinburne, who had written two elegies aiming to honour and perpetuate the memory of two contemporary French poets Baudelaire and Gautier who had written frankly in their published works of the excesses and perversions, the pains and the dangers of erotic life, is revolted by the publication of Keats's private letters which reveal what he considered as immature and childish erotic impulses which were likely to diminish Keats's posthumous reputation. Forman's act in publishing the love-letters would appear to Swinburne as likely to produce the very opposite effects for Keats of that which he intended his elegies on Baudelaire and Gautier to have.

Poems and Ballads (second series, 1878) contains a number of elegies for dead poets. The two most important for the present purpose are those on Baudelaire ('Ave Atque Vale' and on Gautier ('Memorial Verses'). 'In Memory of Barry Cornwall'⁶¹³, is a third important one. Baudelaire was, like Swinburne himself, accused of obscenity during his lifetime on the basis of some published poems. The 1st edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* was convicted of causing offence to public morals; Baudelaire was fined and required to remove the offending poems from the second edition. Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1st Series, 1866) attracted censure on similar grounds for its immorality.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³ Pseudonym of Brian Waller Procter (1787-1874).

⁶¹⁴ *Swinburne: A Poet's Life* 133-137.

This is one of the reasons why Swinburne addresses Baudelaire as 'brother' in 'Ave Atque Vale' and also why he introduces the pallid ghost of Venus the goddess of love into the poem to mourn for Baudelaire. Swinburne is concerned to honour the memory of the poet vilified in his lifetime:

. . . not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.

Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreath an unseen shrine.⁶¹⁵ (XVI: 6-11)

In the same general way, the 'Memorial Verses' on Gautier recall specific works of Gautier that were considered sexually scandalous when first published.⁶¹⁶ Here too Swinburne gestures defiantly to consecrate Gautier as a pagan poet passing to the underworld.

Blue lotus-blooms and white and rosy-red
We wind with poppies for thy silent head,
And on this margin of the Sundering sea
Leave thy sweet light to rise upon the dead.⁶¹⁷ (Stanza 49)

In view of Swinburne's defiant memorialising of scandalous poets (he was himself one) it appears that his animus against Forman is owing to the latter's revelation of the private, tragic and (Swinburne considered) weak and complaining letters, which are far removed from the public celebration of love's pleasures, pains and perversions in

⁶¹⁵ *Poems of Swinburne* iii 56.

⁶¹⁶ These, as mentioned by Swinburne in footnotes, were *La Morte Amoureuse* (1845), *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre* (1845), and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835).

⁶¹⁷ *Poems of Swinburne* iii 65.

Baudelaire and Gautier, which he has consecrated by his elegies. The private pain, anguish and despair of Keats is simply that, and no more. And so Forman ought to have left it in silence. In view of this literary background, Swinburne's sonnets were intended to be deeply ironic. They deal with a love that was never fulfilled and an expression of it in letters of which Swinburne disapproved; and they take as their principal object of scorn a publication which destroys Keats's good name by immortalising a love that in Swinburne's judgement was defective, puerile and badly expressed. Forman's volume therefore distorts and degrades the aims of the great writers of the sonnet tradition, Petrarch and Shakespeare. It immortalises a failed love affair and perpetuates Keats's reputation as an unmanly lover. Swinburne's sonnets are Petrarchan in form and, except for sonnet III which rhymes *abbaabba* in its octave and *cddcaa* in its sestet, rhyme *abbaabba cddcee*. In sonnet I, the fool accomplishes after Keats's death what his critics could not do while he was alive – 'defile the dead man's name'. 'Love, Grief, and Glory' reminds the reader of certain stanzas in Shelley's *Adonais* where the mourners and grief-stricken audience take part in the progress and development of the elegy and in the end are enlightened and made joyous by becoming aware of the fact that Keats has achieved everlasting fame and name by taking his lodgings amongst the eternal. Swinburne had probably read some of the reviews – such as the article in *Scribner's Monthly* – of the 1878 edition of the love-letters, which refused to agree with Forman that Keats's private correspondence was a gift. In Swinburne's view Forman's publication is an unfair transaction in which Keats's blissful and sacred (because private) love-letters are sold to buy him a posthumous poor and obtrusive despair; poor because he has been vulgarised and undervalued by a man looking after his own fame, obtrusive because the accusation of having made ungentlemanly love will remain with the poet for ever.

In the second sonnet, Keats has become a secular saint, 'pure and blameless' in his life. The sonnet means to recall to the reader the life that Keats lived, the work he did for fame, the single-mindedness and the purity of his desire for it. And then ironically to recall the kind of 'fame' that Forman's publication of the love-letters has earned for Keats. The final sentence 'This is fame' invokes Keats's own poems on the subject. It juxtaposes the achievements of two types of persons: natural and original poets such as Keats who achieved fame by abandoning the purposeful and conscious search for fame ('Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy / To those who woo her with too slavish knees, . . . Make your best bow to her and bid adieu - / Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.'⁶¹⁸) and modern editors such as Harry Buxton Forman who have a thirst for reputation by editing and publishing private works of writers. The sonnet is loaded with strong sexual imagery in the forms of visual, tactile, kinetic, and auditory images and the alliteration of words in lines 10 and 11 ('Strip the stark-naked soul, that all may peer, / Spy, smirk, sniff, snap, snort, snivel, snarl, and sneer') adds a power of movement and conviction to its jerky pace.

Sonnet III begins and ends with Shakespeare's 'Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!'⁶¹⁹ This is an important line to which Swinburne gives a reference in a footnote, as

⁶¹⁸ In Keats's poem, 'On Fame'. In his sonnet composed on the tomb of Burns, Keats explains that even though Burns is dead, his presence is felt in the nature, in Keats's imagination and verse and this is fame: 'Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name - / O smile among the shades, for this is fame!' *Barnard* 263-264 and 342-3.

⁶¹⁹ 'Now, what a thing it is to be an ass' from *Titus Andronicus* IV.ii.25. Titus Andronicus sends his grandson the young Lucius with 'goodliest weapons of his armoury' wrapped about in 'a scroll' as gifts to flatter, appease, and deceive Lavinia's rapists Chiron and Demetrius. The Latin lines from Horace, *Odes* I.22.1-2 on the scroll read in translation: 'the man of upright life, and free from crime, has no need of the Moor's javelins or arrows.' The two take a superficial look at the lines but Aaron, Lavinia's black lover, sees into the hidden and real message of the verses: he calls Chiron and Demetrius asses because they do not understand that old Titus has discovered their crime. The weapons are sugar-coated gifts representing Andronicus's

he does to Catullus's epigram. So he expects the reader to look it up. When the reader does look it up, he discovers a scene of reading which dramatises an act of misreading, which is itself corrected by a commentator. The lesson for Forman is evident, and Swinburne means to put him right. Many ironic applications of the scene in *Titus Andronicus* could be made to the situation of Swinburne, Forman, and Keats. The basic intention seems to be that the ideal of character described by Horace in his lines is not appropriate to Forman, the effect of whose actions is violent and destructive like the actions of Chiron and Demetrius. Thus publication of the love-letters is a kind of rape. At the end of the sonnet, there are no inverted commas on the repeated 'Now, what a thing it is to be an ass' because the phrase has been naturalised; Swinburne moves from quotation to assertion. The editor of the love-letters has been targeted 'As foreman [i.e. Forman] of the flock whose concourse greets / Men's ears with bray more dissonant than brass' (ll. 3-4). Lafourcade remarks that 'Buxton Forman is personally taken to task and abused in the most violent and transparent manner . . .' as such people are like ' . . . the parasites who prey on great men's corpses.'⁶²⁰ A 'foreman' is a person who supervises other workers who are not necessarily highly educated. The phrase 'foreman of the flock' reminds the reader of Keats's 'Hymn to Pan' in Book I of *Endymion*, lines 279-92 of which were selected by Arnold to be published in Ward's anthology. The phrase is suggestive of Pan, a god of flocks, who had a lustful nature and like Swinburne's Forman was a voyeur in his fancy as he solicited the nymphs in the forests for sex. The animal imagery in the sonnet is reminiscent of Milton's sonnet XII, 'On the Detraction which followed upon my Writing Certain Treatises', especially lines 3-4: 'When straight a barbarous noise environs me / Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and

vengeful intention. Alan Hughes, ed., *Titus Andronicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 110, footnote 20-1.

⁶²⁰ Lafourcade 41.

dogs.'⁶²¹ Aesop's fable of the donkey turned lapdog is alluded to in order to show that Forman wishes to flatter, but has not the natural character to do so, only damns where he would praise.⁶²² The sestet of sonnet III and the lines of sonnet IV are in the register of the criticism of the critic of Keats in stanzas 36-40 of *Adonais*: Swinburne's 'base hands', 'crown with praise the dust of death', 'heads more shameful', 'ravenous grave-worms choke', 'carrion fume', and 'scare them off' echo Shelley's 'nameless worm', 'whose infamy is not thy fame', 'noteless blot', 'Hot Shame', 'carrion kites', and 'unrest'. Death imagery abounds in the sonnets and in a way the sonnets are elegiac.

In Sonnet IV, a curse is laid on those so shameless as to be insensitive to the shame that is theirs by right for the crime of shaming the dead. Their attempt to gain fame either by condemning Keats's poetry or, as in Forman's case, by praising him through his love-letters is nothing but 'a carrion fume'. 'Twin-born doom' (l.6) is a neo-classical idiom such as used in Milton's sonnet XII, lines 5-7:

As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs
Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.⁶²³

⁶²¹ *Milton: Shorter Poems* 296-297.

⁶²² *The Ass and the Lap-dog or The Dog and Its Master*

There was a man who owned a Maltese lap-dog and an ass. He was always playing with the dog. When he dined out, he would bring back titbits and throw them to the dog when it rushed up, wagging its tail. The ass was jealous of this and, one day, trotted up and started frisking around his master. But this resulted in the man getting a kick on the foot, and he grew very angry. So he drove the ass with a stick back to its manger, where he tied it up.

See Olivia and Robert Temple, trans., *The Complete Fables. Aesop* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 204, Fable 275. [Text and canon from, *Ésope Fables, Texte Établi et Traduit par Émile Chambry* (Paris: Collection des Universitiés de France, 1927)]

⁶²³ *Milton: Shorter Poems* 297.

The formal, elevated poetic phrase signifies Apollo and Diana, the twin-born progeny of Latona. It apparently implies in Swinburne's sonnet the destiny that the violators of poets' personal privacies must live out by day and by night. The rhetoric of the sonnet then is evidently a curse and has been modelled upon stanzas 36-37 of *Adonais*. There are two kinds of curses involved here: one on someone who ruins the reputation of a writer (Keats in *Adonais*) by vicious criticism; the other is suggested in Shakespeare's epitaph which reads:

GOOD FRENDE FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE
TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOSED HEARE:
 E T
BLESTE BE Y MAN Y SPARES THES STONES,
 T
AND CURST BE HE Y MOVES MY BONES.⁶²⁴

Swinburne burned many of his own letters so that people could not publish them after his death.⁶²⁵ On 22 February 1878, he had written a thankful letter to Forman for the gift of the volume of Keats's love letters, referring to it as 'your doubly acceptable and valuable present awaiting me—for which accept my most sincere though seemingly most tardy thanks'.⁶²⁶ Almost three weeks later on 15 March 1878, he wrote another grateful letter to Forman:

Dear Mr. Forman,

⁶²⁴ S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 306. Hereafter *Shakespeare: Documentary Life*. See page 79 and footnotes 208 and 495 for a discussion of Tennyson's poem, *To —, After Reading a Life and Letters* subtitled: "Cursed be he that moves my bones." *Shakespeare's Epitaph*'.

⁶²⁵ Both Wordsworth and Tennyson were against prying into the personal life of an author under the pretext of preparing a biography of him. Dickens and Hardy both burned many of their letters. In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), the revelation to the public of Lucetta's love-letters to Michael Henchard, contributed to the downfall of both. See *Lives of the Poet* 67 and 119.

⁶²⁶ *The Swinburne Letters* iv 44-5.

A thousand thanks for Keats's letters which I find awaiting me on my return from Scotland, and can hardly, though overwhelmed with pressure of immediate personal business, keep from devouring at once.

Yours gratefully,
A. C. Swinburne⁶²⁷

It is not clear why Swinburne wrote two letters conveying the same message. By 1878, his health, always delicate and subject to fits of intense nervous excitement, was seriously undermined by heavy drinking and other excesses.⁶²⁸ Because the two letters to Forman are friendly, one might wonder whether Swinburne knew in advance that Forman was preparing an edition of Keats's letters of whose nature he was unaware. An additional possibility is that he received the book but never read it before sending the letters. In 1879, Swinburne moved to Putney where his friend Watts-Dunton helped him quit his drinking habits and regain his health. A period of six years passed before he made his anger against Forman and his volume public in 1884. Evidently, by then he had forgotten about the genial and approving sentiments of his 1878 letters to Forman; certainly he was in a different general frame of mind and it is possible that he simply altered his opinion of them and the propriety of their publication, though so radical a change of mind is difficult to account for. Buxton Forman stated that before 1878, Swinburne had had access to some of the transcripts of Keats's love-letters, which had been made secretly by Sir Charles Dilke when the letters were lent to him by Fanny's son Herbert Lindon⁶²⁹; it was at this time that Swinburne cultivated his animosity towards the future editor of the love-letters. Forman's unpublished account of Swinburne's dramatic change of opinion gives a very partial explanation:

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.* iv 46.

⁶²⁸ *Swinburne: A Poet's Life* 231-233. For 10 years until 1879, it was believed that Swinburne would not survive.

⁶²⁹ In *Lafourcade* 43-44.

These sonnets on the publication of Keat's [*sic*] love-letters would have been quite respectable had they represented a genuine and spontaneous indignation. But in fact the little man had frequent access to a set of transcripts surreptitiously taken by Sir Charles Dilke when the letters were lent to him by the [*sic*] M. Lindon, from whom I afterwards bought them. Having "spied, smirked, sniffed, snapped, snorted, snivelled, snarled, and sneezed" to his own small heart's content, Swinburne seems to have begrudged the like [/?] privilege to others. However, when I sent him a copy of the book he wrote me the two effusively grateful letters which follow [although they *precede* in *Ashley* 976, as ff. 1-3],—the first, perhaps, forgotten during some three weeks' debauch; for there was no occasion to acknowledge the receipt of the book twice. After those letters, one mistrusts the wrath of the sonnets, though "he does it as like one of these harlotry players as ever I see"⁶³⁰,⁶³¹.

In *Henry IV*, part one, the Hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern exclaims the lines, 'O Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harlotry players as ever I see!' on hearing Falstaff pretend to be King Henry IV and adopt a deliberately inflated and bombastic style, like the sonnets of Swinburne, to entertain the company in a Tavern. 'Harlotry players' signifies knavish actors, and suggests sexual irregularity, and Forman is intimating that Swinburne is showing off for a crowd. Falstaff has been drinking sack, and no doubt Forman intends (as he said in his prose note) to suggest that Swinburne was drunk when he wrote the sonnets. Parodying Swinburne's sonnets he wrote the following one which refers to Swinburne as an ape (in the sense of an imitator of poetry, a poetaster) and, punning on his name, a Swine (an unpleasant sensual person) who has lost his reason under the influence of wine, in retribution for Swinburne's calling him 'a foreman of the flock' and an ass (a fool):

Now, what a thing it is to be an ape!
 To mock & mow [?] with Shakespeare's sacred verse
 And twist the words of Heine to a curse
 Jabbered to make the other monkeys gape!

⁶³⁰ *1 Henry IV* II.v. 399-400: 'O Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harlotry players as ever I see!'

⁶³¹ Written on 29 October 1888 in Forman's handwriting available at *Forman Material, British Library, Ashley* 976 ff.5-7.

Or was it that the over-potent grape
 Availed thy scantling [?] judgement to disperse
 And left thy sallow wit so much the worse
 Thou couldst not hold thee from this sorry jape?
 Swine-born thou art not, sure, for never swine
 Fawned on a man, then sought to foul his back
 With spittle that should turn upon its track
 And foul anew a visage fould with worse.
 Yet of thy deed this is the sordid shape.
 Now, what a thing it is to be an ape.⁶³²

Forman has made Swinburne's 'ass' into an 'ape' (that performs tricks to amuse others while pulling a face) to ridicule him and pay him in his own coin. The publication of the love-letters made a turning point in Swinburne's critical thinking about Keats's character as they presented a new Keats unknown to him before. Hereafter the unpleasant and painful sensations caused by the reading of the letters will remain with him. In his 1882 article on Keats, Swinburne says many things in few powerful and precise words, a discipline that he does not stick with towards the end of the essay. For these reasons sometimes his phrases become harsh, loud, and epigrammatic. As far as matters of Keats's sexuality, sensuality, and upbringing are concerned, his criticism of the poet employs a condemning language that is not without appreciation of the poet's mature qualities. He wrote his essay after he had seen Arnold's rejection of Keats's love-letters in 1880 and perhaps he was jealous of Harry Buxton Forman, because he had seen the contents of the transcripts of some of the letters before they were sold to Forman. Sir Charles kept back some of the letters before giving the rest to Forman and burned some love-letters of Keats later in life. It is possible that these burnt letters contained Keats's explicit sensual requests and the heavily indulging Swinburne of pre-1879 had seen them. The recollection of his own drunken state coupled with his contemporary reading of, or better say voyeuristic watching of, Keats's expressions of

⁶³² *Ibid.* f.6.

love in the letters, formed the seeds of resentment against such inquisitions, a resentment and frustration that were deferred until they exploded with the publication of his satirical sonnets in 1884. Strangely, the publication of the love-letters stimulated Swinburne to condemn Keats's alleged unmanliness, which had been an issue at the heart of any discussion of Keats's poetry and personality from the time Byron and Shelley feminised him in their stanzas. Keats's poetry was condemned by his contemporaries for exhibiting traces of a weak and licentious character; the publication of the love-letters reinforced this belief in many readers and was promoted by writers such as Arnold and Swinburne who discovered in the Keats who was revealed in the letters a man who displayed faults and weaknesses which were at odds with the great artist who produced his best poetry.

CONCLUSION

KEATS THE MAN AND KEATS THE POET, 1883-1895: A SKETCH

Harry Buxton Forman's *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats: Now First Brought Together, Including Poems and Numerous Letters Not Before Published* appeared in 1883 in four handsome volumes and marked 'the indisputable sign of Keats's canonical status'⁶³³, because it included all known poems and letters of Keats and was, as a reviewer declared, the 'most important edition of the poet's poems and letters'⁶³⁴ of its day. The publication of the letters and poems under one general title and a close examination of both gave currency to the idea that Keats's 'letters will always remain the best elucidations of his poems.'⁶³⁵ Together the four volumes include in appendices an unprecedentedly comprehensive collection of many reviews of Keats's poems, articles on his fame and character, and poems by various authors addressed to him or written for his attention, from 1817 up until the publication of the edition in 1883. *Macmillan's Magazine* expressed the view that the letters to Fanny Brawne should have been omitted from Forman's volumes but that, nevertheless, they would be regarded as the standard edition of the complete works of the poet for many years to come.⁶³⁶ The year 1883 saw also the appearance of the American edition of *The Letters of John Keats* by John Gilmer Speed, a grandson of George Keats.⁶³⁷ For his edition, Speed transcribed the manuscripts of Keats's letters to his family in

⁶³³ *Cambridge Companion to Keats* xxxv.

⁶³⁴ *The Edinburgh Review* (July 1885), 3.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.* 35.

⁶³⁶ *Macmillan's Magazine*, 49 (November 1883 – April 1884), 331-332.

⁶³⁷ John Gilmer Speed, ed. *The Letters of John Keats* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1883). Hereafter Speed, *Letters of Keats*.

America, which his mother Emma Keats Speed had preserved but borrowed Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne and to his friends from Buxton Forman and Lord Houghton respectively. He regarded the love-letters as 'painful and pathetic', thereby showing his reticence about them, and even a certain embarrassment at publishing them.⁶³⁸ In his preface to his edition of *Letters of John Keats* (1891), Sidney Colvin remarks that Keats's letters to his family and friends are 'among the most beautiful in our language.'⁶³⁹

Colvin endeavours to print the letters from their original manuscripts. He points up Milnes's flawed and erroneous editorial methods in his 1848 edition, noting that the latter made use of the partial copies of Keats's letters to his family in America supplied to him by John Jeffrey and felt the need to suppress some female names and Keats's anti-Christian remarks, out of respect for those who were still alive in 1848 and in the interest of Keats's name and fame. To produce a reliable edition of the letters Colvin drew largely on Forman and Speed's 1883 volumes and also consulted John Jeffrey's transcripts and all other documents and letters, original or otherwise, that were made available to him by Keats's friends. In 1889, Colvin had borrowed the transcripts of Keats's letters to Fanny Keats from Forman who, as I have indicated in chapter four, managed to establish a cordial correspondence with her. In return for this favour, Colvin had given two additional, hitherto unpublished, love-letters to Forman to include as an addendum at the end of his enlarged and revised edition of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* in 1889.⁶⁴⁰ Colvin took pains to determine the exact date of the letters

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.* xiv.

⁶³⁹ Colvin, *Letters of Keats* xi.

⁶⁴⁰ Colvin refers to the materials he provided Forman with as 'new matter . . . printed separately, in the form of scraps and addenda detached from their context.' *Ibid.* xii. But the two love letters spoken of here were formerly published along with other letters

and arrange the dates of the confusing parts of the long journal letters. Unlike Milnes, Colvin printed the verses which appear in the letters because he thought that the letters derive part of their character from the verse published in them – this was a practice that would be adopted by subsequent editors of Keats's letters, including Forman in 1895. The mood in the letters dictated the spontaneous creation of the verses which express Keats's general feelings of hope, desire, joy, and agony. Readers might thus realise for the first time that Keats's letters cannot be separated from his poems and also that Keats the man and Keats the poet were very intimately connected; this is a view that Colvin does express with certainty, though his edition was incomplete (I will include Forman's 1895 judgment on this matter in the following pages). In the letters, Keats is personal and recognisable as one side of the correspondence he undertakes, whereas in the poems, out of the context of the letters, he is a general poetic voice which pours forth, in poetic language, the common feelings of human beings. A serious reader who is not aware of the context in which the poems were created might think of them as 'classical' in the sense that he finds them charming and beautiful verses which deserve to be anthologised and read for their uniqueness and self-sufficiency. Put in context, the poems are regarded as 'warm from his [Keats's] brain', pieces that are imbued with strong local colour from the life and energy manifest in the letters (xiii). The feelings and aspirations represented in the letters are personal cases that achieve wider appeal once they are relayed to readers by the medium of verse, for the creation of which the letters are necessary. As a modern editor familiar with the published letters of other writers such as Gray, Cowper, Byron, and Shelley, Colvin concludes that Keats's letters are free from 'artifice or disguise' because in them he expresses his enthusiasm for nature, romance, Greek and Roman mythology, and works of the poets bygone just as

by Forman in his 1883 volumes and therefore it is possible that Colvin (or another authority) had lent them to him then. Further references to the preface to Colvin's edition will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

he does with his personal experience of daily life, be it joyful or sorrowful (xv-xvi). The phraseology of the letters was thought of spontaneously and without labour; the writing of the sentences of the letters came as naturally to Keats as the leaves to a tree. Colvin's is a shrewd and just appreciation of the letters by an editor who, for the first time in the history of the publication of Keats's letters, takes a clearly detached and objective view of them. He does not need to defend Keats or to defend the publication of any particular letters, though he omits those to Fanny Brawne, an omission I shall consider later. Apart from that omission, Colvin formulates in essentials the 20th-century attitude to the letters that I sketched in the Introduction.

Milnes, the majority of the reviewers of his 1848 biography, the majority of the reviewers of *LJKFB*, and Arnold and Swinburne, were concerned, each in their own way, with the usefulness and role of the letters in the promotion of Keats's personal character and his social personality, position, and fame. These writers read the letters to discover Keats's character in them and, in the case of the love-letters, push aside what was disagreeable or disturbing. The paramount example among nineteenth-century critics of Keats with a moralistic and philosophical penchant in literary criticism was Arnold who took a utilitarian approach to the letters. In his *Life of John Keats* (1887), W. M. Rossetti wrote – in a language which reflects the temper of Arnold and Swinburne at the publication of the *LJKFB* – that it is a futile activity to try to find Keats's 'noblest self' in his letters to Fanny Brawne; 'as the letters pass further and further into the harsh black shadows of disease, he abandons all self-restraint, and lashes out right and left.'⁶⁴¹ In the preface to his 1887 biography of Keats, Colvin regrets the publication of the love letters; nevertheless, he observes that no biographer can ignore

⁶⁴¹ William Michael Rossetti, *Life of John Keats* (London: Walter Scott, 1887), 45-6.

them now that they are published.⁶⁴² In 1891, Colvin tries for the first time to present Keats's letters as literally independent documents by themselves; thereafter the letters are assessed and appreciated for their own sake. Arnold asserted that style stands for character; perhaps with this judgment in mind, Colvin stated that Keats's letters were written in an English 'which by its peculiar alert and varied movement sometimes recalls, perhaps more closely than that of any other writer . . . the prose passages of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*' (xvi). Colvin did not include the love-letters of Keats in his edition and only omitted passages of 'mere crudity' in Keats's other letters, which, in his estimation, hardly exceeded 'two pages in all', and not those that seemed to represent his irritability, sensitivity, and morbidity of soul (xvii). This is an editorial confidence that results from Keats's position as a poet and letter-writer having been established securely. Colvin excludes the love-letters so as not to violate privacy and also because they lack 'the genial ease and play of mind' of those to his friends and family. So his decision is one of propriety as well as literary judgment (xviii). Their exclusion from consideration by Rossetti in 1887 and Colvin in 1887 and 1891 shows that there were still critics who did not know how to treat the love-letters so as to integrate them into the corpus of Keats's other letters and so make a whole of Keats's literary output. A reviewer of Colvin's 1891 edition states that Keats's letters are 'written from the heart as well as from the head.'⁶⁴³ Taking the lead from Keats, he judges that the letters are 'distilled prose', which never become 'stale'⁶⁴⁴, because they are the fruits of a creatively active mind. The reviewer goes on to say that Keats could

⁶⁴² *Colvin* vi. On page 134 of the biography, Colvin only refers to the first line of the first love-letter in *LJKFB* in passing. See footnote 379 for my consideration of Colvin's estimate of Fanny Brawne's character and her relationship with Keats.

⁶⁴³ *The Literary World* (29 August 1891), 285-6.

⁶⁴⁴ The quotation is from Keats's letter of 19 February 1818 to J. H. Reynolds, the first eight lines of which the reviewer quotes in his article. *Gittings* 65. Gittings has, 'distilled Prose'.

not stop the flow of the letters as he could not help composing poetry. *The Church Quarterly Review* welcomes Colvin's omission of the love-letters but judges that any supposedly standard edition of Keats's letters must be accountable for the questions it raises by omitting them; Keats like any other writer in his private life was entitled to write love-letters and in the circumstances could not avoid it.⁶⁴⁵ It gives a reference in a footnote to any important phrase of a letter it quotes from Colvin's edition, in effect confirming that the letters are valuable autonomous documents that can be read on an equal basis with Keats's poems. Keats's letters on the whole 'form a most excellent and instructive commentary on his published verse.' (173) The above discussion indicates that in the ten years or so after Arnold's and Swinburne's essays, there was a tendency, though not a consistent one, among editors and reviewers to recognise that the publication of the love letters was, on balance, desirable.

The year 1895, one hundred years after Keats's birth, saw the publication of two important books on Keats: *The Letters of John Keats*, a complete edition in one volume by Harry Buxton Forman, which served as a base for the subsequent modern editions of Keats's letters such as his son Maurice Buxton Forman's, and Robert Bridges' *John Keats: A Critical Essay*. As far as the letters of Keats are concerned, Forman judges, in the preface to the volume, that 'the man is not dissociated from the poet in them' because a 'poetic mode of thought' is prevalent in the letters.⁶⁴⁶ Forman's is a modern view with which most would concur when he considers Keats's letters without those to

⁶⁴⁵ *The Church Quarterly Review*, 33 (October 1891 – January 1892), 171-2. Further references to the article in the review will be given as page numbers within round brackets in the text.

⁶⁴⁶ HBF, *Letters of Keats* xiv. See pages 184-85 of this thesis for my consideration of Forman's 1895 judgment of his 1878 edition.

Fanny Brawne as *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.⁶⁴⁷ Keats had not the philosophic turn of mind that Hamlet had but when in the letter of August (?) 1820 to Fanny Brawne he said, 'Hamlet's heart was full of such Misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia "Go to a Nunnery, go, go!"'⁶⁴⁸, he wanted to make sure that she kept aloof from his allegedly flirtatious friend. Forman may mean that *Hamlet* is the dramatisation of the vicissitudes of Hamlet's character and Keats's letters can be read – as I have indicated in the Introduction – as part of the autobiography of the man who like Hamlet was in love but could not attain fulfilment as the result of unfavourable circumstances. Each is conspicuously imperfect, and that imperfection is necessary to an understanding of the whole character.

In his *John Keats: A Critical Essay* (1895), Robert Bridges comments that the chief characteristic of Keats's letters is their 'unalloyed sincerity'.⁶⁴⁹ With regard to the poetic fame of Keats he writes, 'if one English poet might be recalled to-day from the dead to continue the work which he left unfinished on earth, it is probable that the crown of his country's desire would be set on the head of John Keats.'⁶⁵⁰ Some of the reviewers of Milnes's *LLLR* (1848), and later Arnold and Swinburne, tried to show how

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.* xvi.

⁶⁴⁸ *LJKFB* 106 (Gittings 386).

⁶⁴⁹ *Robert Bridges* 93. This was an edition limited to 250 copies. The first and the last chapters (the introduction and the conclusion (entitled 'GENERAL')) are the most important parts of the book for promoting a positive view of Keats's character. In the rest of the book, Bridges attempts to shed light on Keats's *Endymion*, *Sleep and Poetry*, *Hyperion*, *The Eve of St Agnes*, the Odes, Sonnets, Epistles, lyrical poems, *Otho the Great*, *King Stephen*, by explaining a number of lines or stanzas of each poem or play. In other words, he employs close reading techniques to explicate the meaning of the verses. The book also has a chapter on diction and rhythm. Keats is taken as an exemplary practitioner of the art of poetry and his poems examined in detail from this point of view.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 5.

and why Keats's greatest poetry was Shakespearian. Arnold put it down to Keats's 'architectonics' in shorter poems such as the odes, sonnets, and lyrics and to his general 'natural magic'. For Bridges it was Keats's 'material and sensuous subjects' which made his poetry as good as Shakespeare's, because he possessed 'the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point' as Shakespeare did, though the latter is 'of all the poets the greatest master of it.'⁶⁵¹ This is a just and first-rate judgment because it not only praises what was condemned or treated with inadequate attention in Keats for nearly a century but also sets a new course for studies in Keats's appreciation of Shakespeare. For example, an annotated edition of Keats's letters could investigate, among other things, the Shakespearian sources of Keats's phraseology in them. This, for those letters that contain poems, would illuminate them also.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.* 83-84.

APPENDIX 1

Letters of Keats which are included in whole or in part or referred to in Richard Monckton Milnes, *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* (1848) [hereafter *LLLR*], in the order in which they appear. Dates of letters have been verified against *Gittings* (1970) and for those not included by Gittings, against *Rollins* (1958). Where a letter is not dated or assigned to no addressee in *LLLR*, this is indicated.

1816

- 1) To B. R. Haydon, 20 November 1816, [*only discussed and not given in LLLR, date not given*]
- 2) To B. R. Haydon, 20 November 1816, [*no date in LLLR, correct date in Rollins i*]

1817

- 3) To J. H. Reynolds, 17 March 1817
- 4) To J. H. Reynolds, 17 Apr. 1817, [*Gittings: 17, 18 April 1817*]
- 5) To B. R. Haydon, 10-11 May 1817
- 6) To Leigh Hunt, 10 May 1817
- 7) To Taylor and Hessey, 16 May 1817
- 8) To Taylor and Hessey, 10 Jul. 1817, [*Rollins i: 10 June 1817*]
- 9) To Jane and Marianne Reynolds, 14 September 1817
- 10) To J. H. Reynolds, 21 September 1817
- 11) To B. R. Haydon, 28 September 1817
- 12) To Benjamin Bailey, 8 October 1817
- 13) To Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817
- 14) To J. H. Reynolds, 22 Nov. 1817

1818

- 15) To John Taylor, 23 Jan. 1818
- 16) To Benjamin Bailey, 23 Jan. 1818
- 17) To J. H. Reynolds, 31 Jan. 1818, [*only in LLLR and Rollins*]
- 18) To J. H. Reynolds, 3 Feb. 1818

19) To J. H. Reynolds, 19 Feb. 1818

1817

20) To my dear brothers [George and Tom], 22 Dec. 1817, [*Gittings*: 21, 27 (?) Dec. 1817]

1818

21) To my dear brothers [George and Tom], 23 Jan. 1818, [*Gittings*: 23, 24 Jan. 1818]

22) To my dear brothers [George and Tom], 16 Feb. 1818, [*Gittings*: 14 Feb. 1818]

23) To my dear brothers [George and Tom], 21 Feb. 1818

24) To my dear brothers [George and Tom], April 21, [1818], [*Gittings*: 13, 19 Jan. 1818]

25) To John Taylor, 30 Jan. 1818

26) To John Taylor, 27 Feb. [1818]

27) To J. H. Reynolds, 14 March [1818]

28) To J. H. Reynolds, 25 March 1818

29) To James Rice, 25 March 1818, [*Gittings*: 24 March 1818]

30) To J. H. Reynolds, 9 April 1818

31) To J. H. Reynolds, 10 April 1818

32) To J. H. Reynolds, 27 April 1818

33) To John Taylor, 27 April 1818 [*Gittings*: 24 Apr. 1818]

34) To J. H. Reynolds, 3 May 1818

35) To Benjamin Bailey, 25 May 1818 [*Gittings*: 21, 25 May 1818]

36) To Benjamin Bailey, 10 June 1818

37) To Tom Keats, 29 June 1818 [*Gittings*: 1, 2 July 1818]

38) To Tom Keats, 10-14 July [*addressee and date not given in LLLR*]

39) To Tom Keats, 3 July 1818 [*Gittings*: 3, 5, 7, 9 July 1818]

40) To J. H. Reynolds, 11 July 1818 [*Rollins* i: 11, 13 July 1818]

41) To Benjamin Bailey, 18 July 1818 [*Gittings*: 18, 22 July 1818]

- 42) To Tom Keats, 23 July 1818 [*Gittings*: 23, 26 July 1818]
 43) To Tom Keats, 3, 6 August 1818 [*addressee and date not given in LLLR*]
 44) To Madam [Mrs. James Wylie, George's mother-in-law], 6 August 1818

1817

- 45) To Benjamin Bailey, 3 Nov. 1817, [*part of a letter; addressee and date not given in LLLR*]

1818

- 46) To J. A. Hessey, 9 Oct. 1818, [*Gittings*: 8 Oct. 1818]
 47) To Benjamin Bailey, Sep. 1818, [*Gittings*: 13 March 1818]
 48) To Richard Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818
 49) To George [Keats], 29 Oct. 1818, [*Gittings*: 14, 16, 21, 24, 31 Oct. 1818]
 50) To James Rice, 24 Nov. 1818
 51) To Richard Woodhouse, 18 Dec. 1818, [*no date in LLLR, correct date in Rollins i*]
 52) To J. H. Reynolds, [*no date in LLLR; Gittings*: 22 (?) Sep. 1818]

1818-1819

- 53) To my dear brother and sister [George and Georgiana Keats], [*no date in LLLR; Gittings*: 16-18, 22, 29 (?), 31 Dec. 1818, 2-4 Jan. 1819]
 54) To my dear brother and sister [George and Georgiana Keats], 14 Feb. 1819. [*Gittings*: 14, 19 Feb., 3 (?), 12, 13, 17, 19 Mar., 15, 16, 21, 30 Apr., 3 May 1819]
 55) To James Rice, December 1819, [*no date in LLLR, letter not in full, no addressee*]
 56) To J. H. Reynolds, 12 July 1819, [*Gittings*: 11 July 1819]
 57) To C. W. Dilke, 2 Aug. 1819, [*Gittings*: 31 July 1819]
 58) To B. R. Haydon, 3 Oct. 1819, [*no date in LLLR*]
 59) To Benjamin Bailey, 14 Aug. 1819, [*no date in LLLR*]
 60) To John Taylor, 23 Aug. 1819
 61) To J. H. Reynolds, 25 Aug 1819 [*Gittings*: 24 Aug 1819]
 62) To C. W. Dilke, 22 Sep. 1819 [*no date in LLLR*]

63) To John Taylor, 5 Sep. 1819

64) To J. H. Reynolds, 22 Sep. 1819 [*Gittings*: 21 Sep 1819]

65) To C. A. Brown, 23 Sep. 1819 [*Gittings*: 22 Sep 1819]

66) To C. A. Brown, 23 Sep. 1819

67) To C. W. Dilke, 1 Oct. 1819

68) To John Taylor, 17 Nov. 1819

69) To George and Georgiana Keats, [*no date in LLLR, Gittings*: 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27 Sep. 1819]

1820

70) To Georgiana Wylie Keats, 13, 15, 17, 28 Jan. 1820

71) To James Rice, 14, 16 Feb. 1820

72) To C. W. Dilke, 4 March 1820

1819

73) To C. W. Dilke, [*placed wrongly among the 1820 letters, Rollins* ii: June (?) 1819]

1820

74) To John Taylor, 11 June [1820], [*Gittings*: 11 (?) June 1820]

75) To C. A. Brown, [*no date in LLLR, Gittings*: 'about 21 June 1820]

76) To C. A. Brown, [*no date in LLLR, Gittings*: 14 Aug. 1820]

77) To B. R. Haydon, [*no date in LLLR, Rollins* ii: Aug. (?) 1820]

78) To John Taylor, 14 Aug. 1829, [*Gittings*: 13 Aug. 1820]

79) To C. A. Brown, [*no date in LLLR, Gittings*: Aug. (?) 1820]

80) To C. A. Brown, 28 Sep. 1820, [*Gittings*: 30 Sep 1820]

81) To C. A. Brown, 1 Nov. 1820

82) To C. A. Brown, 30 Nov. 1820

APPENDIX 2

Letters of Keats collected by Milnes in his *LLLR*, and arranged chronologically as they appear in *Gittings* (1970) or in *Rollins* (1958) in the case of a letter not included by Gittings. The arabic numbers mark the order of letters in *LLLR*. An arrow indicates a letter misplaced chronologically by Milnes which has been restored to its correct place. Milnes's original placing of such a letter is signalled in the numbered list by a highlighted reference to the date and addressee. Significant topics, phrases, references to persons are given as they occur in the integral versions of the letters in *Gittings* or *Rollins*, and these are compared with the treatment they receive in *LLLR*.

1816

1) 20 November 1816, To B. R. Haydon, [*only discussed and not given in LLLR, date not given*]. Poem, 'Great Spirits now on Earth are sojourning', *Gittings* 2. Milnes records only the first line of the poem. *LLLR* i 28.

2) 21 November 1816, To B. R. Haydon, [*no date in LLLR, correct date in Rollins i*]. Poem, 'Great Spirits now on Earth are sojourning', *Rollins* i 118-119. Milnes does not record the poem. *LLLR* i 28-29.

1817

3) 17 March 1817, To J. H. Reynolds. 'improve myself for a better good' and 'banish health and banish all the world . . . I must myself', *Gittings* 3. Milnes records the same topics in his own words. *LLLR* i 30-31.

4) 17, 18 April 1817, To J. H. Reynolds, [*LLLR: 17 Apr. 1817*]. 'On the Sea', *Gittings* 6. Milnes records only the first line of the poem. *LLLR* i 34.

—> 10 May 1817, To Leigh Hunt. 'Does Shelley go on telling strange Stories of the Death of kings? Tell him there are stran<ge> Stories of the death of Poets—some have died before they were conceived . . . Does Mrs S— cut Bread and Butter as neatly as ever? Tell her to procure some fatal Scissars [*sic*] and cut the th[r]ead of Life of all to be disappointed Poets.' *Gittings* 11. Milnes omits 'Does Mrs S—' *LLLR* i 44.

5) 10-11 May 1817, To B. R. Haydon. 'Money Troubles are to follow us up for some time to come perhaps for always—', 'I have a horrid Morbidity of Temperament which has shown itself at intervals—', 'I am very near Agreeing with Hazlit [*sic*] that Shakspeare [*sis*] is enough for us—', *Gittings* 12-14. Milnes records the same topics in his own words. *LLLR* i 38-40.

6) 10 May 1817, To Leigh Hunt

7) 16 May 1817, To Taylor and Hessey.

8) [*Rollins i: 10 June 1817*], To Taylor and Hessey, [*LLLR: 10 Jul. 1817*].

9) 14 September 1817, To Jane and Marianne Reynolds.

10) 21 September 1817, To J. H. Reynolds. Includes the poem, 'I have examined and do find' which has 10 stanzas. *Gittings* 21-23. Milnes also records the poem. *LLLR* i 56-58.

11) 28 September 1817, To B. R. Haydon.

12) 8 October 1817, To Benjamin Bailey. 'Haydon and Hunt . . . live pour ainsi dire jealous Neighbours.' Hunt ridicules Keats's writing of 4000 lines of *Endymion*. Keats refuses to 'visit Shelley, that I might have my own unfettered scope-'. *Gittings* 26-7. Milnes records only the last line about Keats's refusal to see Shelley. *LLLR* i 61.

—> 3 Nov. 1817, To Benjamin Bailey, [*in part; addressee and date not given in LLLR*]. Expresses hatred for hypocrite bishops and 'the Bishop of Lincoln'. '-we must bear . . . the Proud Mans Contumely—O for a recourse somewhat human independent of the great Consolations of Religion and undepraved [*sic*] Sensations. [*sic*] of the Beautiful. The poetical in all things.' '[—There has been a flaming attack upon Hunt in the Edinburgh Magazine—I never read any thing so virulent . . .]' Poem, 'O Sorrow'. *Gittings* 32-35. Of all these, Milnes only records the attack on Hunt in *LLLR* i 193.

13) 22 November 1817, To Benjamin Bailey. 'I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts! . . . we shall enjoy ourselves here after by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated— . . . the world is full of troubles . . . if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel.' *Gittings* 36-38. Milnes Keeps all of the above. *LLLR* i 64-67.

14) 22 November 1817, To J. H. Reynolds. 'I neer [*sic*] found so many beauties in the sonnets [of Shakespeare]' *Gittings* 40. Also in *LLLR* i 70.

—> 21, 27 (?) Dec. 1817, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: 22 Dec. 1817]. 'the excellence of every Art is its intensity . . . Negative Capability'. *Gittings* 42-3. Also in *LLLR* i 92-94.

1818

—> 13, 19 Jan. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: April 21, 1818]. ' . . . if there were three things superior in the modern world, they were "the Excursion. [*sic*]" "Haydon's pictures" & "Hazlitts depth of Taste"' *Gittings* 49. Also in *LLLR* i 105.

15) 23 Jan. 1818, To John Taylor.

16) 23 Jan. 1818, To Benjamin Bailey. 'On seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair-', 'I sat down to read King Lear yesterday . . . ', *Gittings* 54-55. Milnes keeps the poem on Milton and mentions Keats's intention to write a sonnet on King Lear. *LLLR* i 78-80.

—> 23, 24 Jan. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: 23 Jan. 1818]. Sonnet: 'On sitting down to King Lear once Again', *Gittings* 57. Also in *LLLR* i 96-7.

—> 30 Jan. 1818, To John Taylor. 'Pleasure Thermometer' in *Endymion*. *Gittings* 60. Also in *LLLR* i 107.

17) [*Rollins* i: 31 Jan. 1818], To J. H. Reynolds. 'O blush not so, O blush not so', 'Hence Burgundy, Claret & port', 'When I have fears that I may cease to be'. *Rollins* i 219-222. Milnes omits 'O blush not so, O blush not so', records 'Hence Burgundy, Claret & port', but only gives the first line of 'When I have fears that I may cease to be'. He refers the reader to the 'Literary Remains' for the whole poem. *LLLR* i 81-83.

18) 3 Feb. 1818, To J. H. Reynolds. Keats says, 'Wordsworth [is] an Egotist', 'Poetry should be great & unobtrusive', 'Let us have the old Poets, & robin Hood Your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the 4th Book of Childe Harold & the whole of any body's life & opinions.' *Gittings* 60-61. Also in *LLLR* i 84-85.

—> 14 Feb. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: 16 Feb. 1818]. 'Shelley, Hunt & I wrote each a Sonnet on the River Nile', poem 'Nehemia Muggs—An Exposure of the Methodists----' *Gittings* 63. Milnes does not print 'Nehemia Muggs' but adds the poems, 'To THE NILE.', 'THE NILE.' and 'OZYMANDIAS.' to the end of the letter. *LLLR* i 99-101.

19) 19 Feb. 1818, To J. H. Reynolds. Keats puts forward the themes: 'voyage of conception', 'delicious diligent Indolence!', 'grand democracy of Forest Trees', 'let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive—'. Poem, 'O thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind;' *Gittings* 65-67. Also in *LLLR* i 87-90.

20) 21, 27 (?) Dec. 1817, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: 22 Dec. 1817]

21) 23, 24 Jan. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: 23 Jan. 1818]

22) 14 Feb. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom] [*LLLR*: 16 Feb. 1818]

23) 21 Feb. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom]. Accuses Wordsworth of 'egotism, Vanity and bigotry'. *Gittings* 69. Milnes omits the remark. *LLLR* i 103.

—> 27 Feb. [1818], To John Taylor. 'Poetry [should come] as naturally as the Leaves to a tree . . .', 'I can read and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths.' *Gittings* 70. Also in *LLLR* i 108.

24) 13, 19 Jan. 1818, To my dear brothers [George and Tom], [*LLLR*: April 21, 1818]

25) 30 Jan. 1818, To John Taylor

26) 27 Feb. [1818], To John Taylor

—> 13 March 1818, To Benjamin Bailey, [*LLLR*: Sep. 1818]. 'Things real—things semireal—and no things,' poem, 'Four Seasons fill the Measure of the year;' *Gittings* 73. Also in *LLLR* i 219-220. However, Milnes records only the first line of the poem and refers the reader to the 'Literary Remains' for the whole poem.

27) 14 March [1818], To J. H. Reynolds.

----> 24 March 1818, To James Rice, [LLLR: 25 March 1818]. Poem, 'Over the hill and over the dale,' *Gittings* 78-79. Milnes records only the first four lines of the poem in *LLLR* i 119.

28) 25 March 1818, To J. H. Reynolds. Poem, 'Dear Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed,' *Gittings* 79-82. Milnes omits the last four lines of the poem. *LLLR* i 79-82.

29) 24 March 1818, To James Rice, [LLLR: 25 March 1818]

30) 9 April 1818, To J. H. Reynolds. Keats feels humble towards 'the eternal Being, the Principal of Beauty,--and the Memory of great Men—'; he does not wish to write for the public. *Gittings* 85. Also in *LLLR* i 120-121.

31) 10 April 1818, To J. H. Reynolds.

—> 24 April 1818, To John Taylor, [LLLR: 27 April 1818]. '... there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world.' *Gittings* 88. Also in *LLLR* i 129-130.

32) 27 April 1818, To J. H. Reynolds.

33) 24 Apr. 1818, To John Taylor, [LLLR: 27 April 1818]

34) 3 May 1818, To J. H. Reynolds. Keats says his knowledge of medicine will not affect his poetry, *Gittings* 91; 'difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge', 92; poem, 'Mother of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!', 92; 'axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses', 93; 'I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments', 95; Keats thinks that Wordsworth is greater than Milton, 96. Also in *LLLR* i 133-139.

35) 21, 25 May 1818, To Benjamin Bailey, [LLLR: 25 May 1818].

36) 10 June 1818, To Benjamin Bailey. Keats says 'Georgiana is the most disinterested woman I ever knew—', *Gittings* 100. Also in *LLLR* i 147.

37) 1, 2 July 1818, To Tom [Keats], [LLLR: 29 June 1818]. Keats's empathy: 'we are mere creatures of Rivers, Lakes, & mountains,' *Gittings* 109; Poem 'On visiting the Tomb of Burns', 109. Also in *LLLR* i 156-157.

—> 3, 5, 7, 9 July 1818, To Tom [Keats], [LLLR: 3 July 1818].

38) 10-14 July, To Tom [Keats], [*addressee and date not given in LLLR*]. Poems, 'Ah! ken ye what I met the day', *Gittings* 124-125; 'To Alisa Rock—', 126; compares and contrasts Irishmen with Scotsmen, 127. Milnes omits all these and adds 'This mortal body of a thousand days'. *LLLR* i 158-159.

39) 3, 5, 7, 9 July 1818, To Tom [Keats], [LLLR: 3 Jul. 1818]

40) [*Rollins* i: 11, 13 July 1818], To J. H. Reynolds, [LLLR: 11 July 1818].

41) 18, 22 Jul. 1818, To Benjamin Bailey, [LLLR: 18 July 1818]. Keats says he becomes embarrassed when he confronts women; poem, 'There is a joy in footing slow

across a silent plain,' *Gittings* 136, 138-140. However, Milnes changes 'joy' to 'charm'. *LLLR* i 180-181.

42) 23, 26 Jul. 1818, To Tom [Keats], [*LLLR*: 23 July 1818]. Poem, 'Not Aladin magian', *Gittings* 143-4. Also in *LLLR* i 186-187.

43) 3, 6 August 1818, To Tom [Keats], [*addressee and date not given in LLLR*]. Poem, 'Read me a Lesson muse, and speak it loud'. *Gittings* 148. Also in *LLLR* i 189.

44) 6 August 1818, To Madam [Mrs. James Wylie, George's mother-in-law].

45) 3 Nov. 1817, To Benjamin Bailey, [*part of a letter; addressee and date not given in LLLR*]

—> 22 (?) Sep. 1818, To J. H. Reynolds, [*no date in LLLR*]. Poem, 'Nature withheld Cassandra in the skies'. *Gittings* 154. Also in *LLLR* i 241; Milnes adds a French translation of the poem.

46) 8 Oct. 1818, To J. A. Hessey, [*LLLR*: 9 Oct. 1818]. With regards to the poor reception of *Endymion*, Keats says that he is 'a severe critic on his own Works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict.' *Gittings* 155. 'I have written independently *without Judgment*—I may write independently & *with Judgment* hereafter.' 156. Also in *LLLR* i 214.

47) 13 March 1818, To Benjamin Bailey, [*LLLR*: Sep. 1818]

48) 27 Oct. 1818, To Richard Woodhouse. 'A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity—' *Gittings* 157. Also in *LLLR* i 221-222.

49) 14, 16, 21, 24, 31 Oct. 1818, To George [Keats], [*LLLR*: 29 Oct. 1818]. Keats mentions the hostile reviews of his poetry in 'Blackwood's Magazine' and the 'Quarterly Review'. *Gittings* 161. '. . . I shall be among the English Poets after my death.' 161. Admires Jane Cox as a 'Charmian'. 162. Poem, "'Tis 'the witching time of night'", 165-6. Also in *LLLR* i 227-234.

50) 24 Nov. 1818, To James Rice.

51) [*Rollins* i: 18 Dec. 1818], To Richard Woodhouse, [*no date in LLLR*].

52) 22 (?) Sep. 1818, To J. H. Reynolds, [*no date in LLLR*].

1818-1819

53) 16-18, 22, 29 (?), 31 Dec. 1818, 2-4 Jan. 1819, To my dear brother and sister [George and Georgiana Keats], [*dated 1818--19 in LLLR*]. Keats announces the death of Tom; *Gittings* 175. Poems, 'Star of high promise!—not to this dark age'; 186. 'Ever let the Fancy roam'; 189-192, 'Bards of Passion and of Mirth'; 193-4, and 'I had a dove and the sweet dove died'; 194-5. Milnes only gives the sonnet addressed to Keats: 'Star of high promise!—not to this dark age' in *LLLR* i 254.

54) 14, 19 Feb., 3 (?), 12, 13, 17, 19 Mar., 15, 16, 21, 30 Apr., 3 May 1819, To my dear brother and sister [George and Georgiana Keats], [LLLR: 14 Feb. 1819]. 'A Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory—' *Gittings* 218. Omitted in *LLLR*. 'While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events . . . and suddenly bears a poison fruit from which we must pluck,' 228. Also in *LLLR* i 265. Socrates and Jesus 'had hearts comp[li]etely disinterested'; 229. Also in *LLLR* i 266. Bible was altered by 'the pious frauds of Religion,' 230. Omitted in *LLLR* i 267. 'Do you not think I strive—to know myself?' 230. Also in *LLLR* i 267. Love of 'divine Philosophy', 230. Also in *LLLR* i 267. Poem, 'Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:' 231. Milnes only gives the first line of 'When I have fears . . .'; he refers the reader to the 'Literary Remains' for the whole poem. *LLLR* i 268. Hatred of the writer of 'Amena' letters to Tom, 232. Omitted in *LLLR*. Poem, 'When they were come unto the Faery's Court' (234-237); omitted in *LLLR*. Poem, 'As Hermes once took to his feathers light' (239-240), omitted in *LLLR*. Milnes refers the reader to the 'Literary Remains' for the whole poem. Poem, 'La belle dame sans merci—' (243-244), omitted in *LLLR*. Poems, 'On Fame' (252), 'Another on Fame' (252), 'To Sleep' (253), 'Ode to Psyche—' (253-255), all omitted in *LLLR*. 'Call the world if you Please "The vale of Soul-making"' (249), omitted in *LLLR*. Keats puts forward his own 'system of Salvation', 250, omitted in *LLLR*.

55) December 1819, To James Rice, [*no date in LLLR, letter not in full, no addressee*]

—> [*Rollins* ii: June (?) 1819], To C. W. Dilke, [*placed wrongly among the 1820 letters*].

56) 11 July 1819, To J. H. Reynolds, [*LLLR*: 12 July 1819].

57) 31 July 1819, To C. W. Dilke, [*LLLR*: 2 Aug. 1819]. Keats refers to Brown's illegitimate child at the end of the letter, *Gittings* 274. Omitted in *LLLR* ii 9.

58) 3 Oct. 1819, To B. R. Haydon, [*no date in LLLR*].

59) 14 Aug. 1819, To Benjamin Bailey, [*no date in LLLR*]. Keats announces having written 'the Pot of Basil . . . St Agnes' Eve . . . Lamia . . . 4 Acts of a Tragedy.' *Gittings* 276. Also in *LLLR* ii 11.

60) 23 Aug. 1819, To John Taylor. Hopes his 'Tragedy' sells well. *Gittings* 280. Omitted in *LLLR* ii 12-13.

61) 24 Aug 1819, To J. H. Reynolds, [*LLLR*: 25 Aug 1819]. Keats says that 'Soul is a world of itself', and that he writes 'what he feels'. *Gittings* 282. Also in *LLLR* ii 14-15.

62) 22 Sep. 1819, To C. W. Dilke, [*no date in LLLR*].

63) 5 Sep. 1819, To John Taylor. Poem, 'A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone'. *Gittings* 288-290. Omitted in *LLLR* ii 23.

—> 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27 Sep. 1819, To George and Georgiana Keats. 'the mire of a bad reputation which is constantly rising against me . . . I am a weaver boy to them--' *Gittings* 305. Says 'imaginary ills' are worse than real ones. 305. Talks about England,

politics and 'french revolution'. 312-313. 'The Cowardliness of the Edinburgh is worse than the abuse of the Quarterly.' 314. Poems, 'Upon a Sabbath day it fell;' and '-Als writeth he of swevenis', 315-318. Keats's definition of personal identity: 'The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts.' 326. Rejects 'Godwin-methodist' views. 326. Milnes omits all these remarks and opinions. *LLLR* ii 37-39.

64) 21 Sep 1819, To J. H. Reynolds, [*LLLR*: 22 Sep. 1819]. Speaks of writing 'To Autumn'; 'English ought to be kept up.' *Gittings* 292. Also in *LLLR* ii 25.

65) 22 Sep 1819, To C. A. Brown, [*LLLR*: 23 Sep. 1819]. 299.

—> 22 Sep. 1819, To C. W. Dilke, [*no date in LLLR*]. Thinks of doing something for immediate welfare by 'writing in periodical works'. *Gittings* 301. Also in *LLLR* ii 17.

66) 23 Sep. 1819, To C. A. Brown. 'Imaginary grievances have always been more my torment than real ones.' *Gittings* 303. Also in *LLLR* ii 30.

67) 1 Oct. 1819, To C. W. Dilke.

—> 3 Oct. 1819, To B. R. Haydon, [*no date in LLLR*]. Remembers harsh reviews of his poetry. *Gittings* 332. Remarks omitted in *LLLR* ii 10.

68) 17 Nov. 1819, To John Taylor. Keats's 'greatest ambition' is to write a 'few fine plays'. *Gittings* 341. Also in *LLLR* ii 36.

—> December 1819, To James Rice, [*no date in LLLR, letter not in full, no addressee*].

69) 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27 Sep. 1819, To George and Georgiana Keats, [*no date in LLLR*].

1820

70) 13, 15, 17, 28 Jan. 1820, To Georgiana Wylie Keats. Keats has recently finished 'Ode to the nightingale'. *Gittings* 348. 'Thank God there are many who will sacrifice their worldly interests for a friend: I wish there were more who would sacrifice their passions. The worst of Men are those whose self interests are their passion--the next those whose passions are their self-interests.' 348. Milnes omits these considerations.

71) 14, 16 Feb. 1820, To James Rice. Keats assets the importance of flowers for his imagination. *Gittings* 359. Illness sharpens one's perception. *Gittings* 359. Also in *LLLR* ii 56.

72) 4 March 1820, To C. W. Dilke. *Gittings* 365-366.

73) June (?) 1819, To C. W. Dilke, [*placed wrongly among the 1820 letters, no date in LLLR*]

74) 11 (?) June 1820, To John Taylor, [*LLLR*: 11 June 1820]. *Gittings* 380-1.

75) "about 21 June 1820", To C. A. Brown, [*no date in LLLR*]. Keats's last book is coming out, yet he has 'very low hopes'. *Gittings* 381. Also in *LLLR* ii 62.

—> 13 Aug. 1820, To John Taylor, [*LLLR*: 14 Aug. 1829]. Hates the idea of going to Italy for treatment. *Gittings* 387. Also in *LLLR* ii 66.

76) 14 Aug. 1820, To C. A. Brown, [*no date in LLLR*]. ‘A winter in England would . . . kill me.’ 388. Shelley has invited Keats to Italy to stay with him. *Gittings* 389. Also in *LLLR* ii 64-65.

77) [*Rollins* ii: Aug. (?) 1820], To B. R. Haydon, [*no date in LLLR*]. Journey to Italy recommended for Keats. *Rollins* ii 328. Also in *LLLR* ii 65.

78) 13 Aug. 1820, To John Taylor, [*LLLR*: 14 Aug. 1829].

79) Aug. (?) 1820, To C. A. Brown, [*no date in LLLR*]. ‘The sale of my book is very slow, though it has been very highly rated.’ *Gittings* 390. Also in *LLLR* ii 67.

80) 30 Sep 1820, To C. A. Brown, [*LLLR*: 28 Sep. 1820]. Keats says, ‘I wish for death every day to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away’ and ‘Is there another Life?’ *Gittings* 394. Also in *LLLR* ii 73-74.

81) 1 Nov. 1820, To C. A. Brown. Leaves Quarantine in Naples. ‘I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprised me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end?’ *Gittings* 396-397. Also in *LLLR* ii 77-79.

82) 30 Nov. 1820, To C. A. Brown. Keats says, ‘I have an habitual feeling of my real life having past, and that I am leading a posthumous existence;’ and that ‘the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach.’ *Gittings* 398. Also in *LLLR* ii 83.

APPENDIX 3**THE CONTENTS OF MILNES'S 'LITERARY REMAINS'**

- 1) OTHO THE GREAT. A Tragedy. IN FIVE ACTS, 111-203.
- 2) KING STEPHEN. A Dramatic Fragment., 204-214.
- 3) THE CAP AND BELLS; Or, the Jealousies. A FAERY TALE. UNFINISHED., 215-251.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

- 4) ODE TO APOLLO. *Feb.* 1815., 252-254.
- 5) HYMN TO APOLLO., 255- 256.
- 6) ON ['THINK not of it, sweet one, so;—'] 1817., 257.
- 7) LINES. ['UNFELT, unheard, unseen,'] 1817., 258.
- 8) SONG. ['HUSH, hush! Tread softly! hush, hush, my dear!'] 1818., 259-260.
- 9) SONG. ['I HAD a dove and the sweet dove died;'] 1818., 260.
- 10) FAERY SONG. ['SHED no tear! O, shed no tear!'], 261.
- 11) SONG. ['SPIRIT here that reignest!'], 262.
- 12) FAERY SONG. ['AH! Woe is me! Poor silver-wing!'] 263.
- 13) EXTRACTS FROM AN OPERA. ['O! WERE I one of the Olympian twelve,'] 1818. 264-265.
- 14) DAISY'S SONG. ['The sun, with his great eye,'] 264.
- 15) FOLLY'S SONG. ['When wedding fiddles are a-playing,'] 265-266.
- 16) O, I am frighten'd with most hateful thoughts!, 266.
- 17) SONG. ['The stranger lighted from his steed,'] 266-267.
- 18) Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!, 267.
- 19) LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI. A BALLAD. 1819., 268-270.
- 20) SONG OF FOUR FAIRIES, FIRE, AIR, EARTH, AND WATER, SALAMANDER, ZEPHYR, DUSKETHA, AND BREAMA. 1819., 271-275.
- 21) ODE ON INDOLENCE. "They toil not, neither do they spin." 1819., 276-278.

22) THE EVE OF SAINT MARK. (UNFINISHED.). 1819., 279-283.

23) TO FANNY. [PHYSICIAN Nature! let my spirit blood!], 284-286.

SONNETS

24) OH! How I love, on a fair summer's eve, 1816., 287.

25) TO A YOUNG LADY WHO SENT ME A LAUREL CROWN., ['FRESH morning guests have blown away all fear'] 288.

26) AFTER dark vapours have oppress'd our plains, *Jan.* 1817, 289.

27) WRITTEN ON THE BLANK SPACE OF A LEAF AT THE END OF CHAUCER'S TALE OF "THE FLOWRE AND THE LEEFE." ['THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse:'] *Feb.* 1817., 290.

28) ON THE SEA. *Aug.* 1817., 291.

29) ON LEIGH HUNT'S POEM, THE "STORY OF RIMINI." 1817., 292.

30) WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be. 1817., 293.

31) TO HOMER. ['STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,'] 1818., 294.

32) ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS:— "Dark eyes are dearer far [/] Than those that made the hyacinthine bell;" By J. H. Reynolds. *Feb.* 1818. 295.

33) TO J. H. REYNOLDS. ['O THAT a week could be an age, and we'] 296.

34) TO — [A lady whom he saw for some few moments at Vauxhall.] ['TIME'S sea hath been five years at its slow ebb;'] 297.

35) TO SLEEP. ['O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight!'] 1819., 298.

36) ON FAME. ['FAME, like a wayward girl, will still be coy'] 1819., 299.

37) ON FAME. "You cannot eat your cake and have it too."—*Proverb.* ['How fever'd is the man who cannot look'] 1819., 300.

38) WHY did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:, 1819, 301.

39) ON A DREAM. ['As Hermes once took to his feathers light,'] 1819., 302.

40) IF by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd, 1819., 303.

41) THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!, 1819., 304.

42) I CRY your mercy—pity—love!—aye, love!, 1819., 305.

43) KEATS'S LAST SONNET. ['BRIGHT star! Would I were steadfast as thou art—
'], 306.

APPENDIX 4

The love-letters of Keats arranged in the order in which they appear in *LJKFB* (1878). Dates of letters have been verified against *Gittings* (1970) and for those not included by *Gittings*, against *Rollins* (1958). Where a letter is not dated or assigned to no addressee in *LJKFB*, this is indicated.¹

1819

- 1) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 3 July 1819, [*Gittings*: 1 July 1819]
- 2) To Fanny Brawne, 8 July, [*Gittings*: 8 July 1819]
- 3) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 27 July 1819, [*Gittings*: 25 July 1819]²
- 4) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 9 August 1819, [*Gittings*: 5, 6 Aug. 1819]
- 5) To Fanny Brawne, 17 August; *postmark*, 16 August 1819, [*Gittings*: 16 Aug. 1819]
- 6) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 14 Sep. 1819, [*Gittings*: 13 Sep. 1819]
- 7) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 11 Oct. 1819, [*Gittings*: 11 Oct. 1819]
- 8) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 13 Oct. 1819, [*Gittings*: 13 Oct. 1819]
- 9) To Fanny Brawne, *postmark*, 19 Oct. 1819, [*Gittings*: 19 Oct. 1819]

1820

- 10) To Fanny Brawne, 4(?) Feb. 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 11) To Fanny Brawne, 10(?) Feb. 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 12) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 13) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 14) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 15) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 16) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 17) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]

¹ *LJKFB*, *Gittings*, and *Rollins* each include 37, 32, and 39 letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne respectively.

² Keats's letter of 15(?) July 1819 written from Shanklin and printed on p.268 in *Gittings*, is not included in *LJKFB*.

- 18) To Fanny Brawne, Feb.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 19) To Fanny Brawne, 24(?) Feb. 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 20) To Fanny Brawne, 28(?) Feb. 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 21) To Fanny Brawne, 29(?) Feb. 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 22) To Fanny Brawne, 1 March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 23) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 24) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 25) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 26) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 27) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 28) To Fanny Brawne, 27(?) Feb. 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 29) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 30) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 31) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 32) To Fanny Brawne, March(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Rollins ii*]
- 33) To Fanny Brawne, 25 June(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 34) To Fanny Brawne, 4 July(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 35) To Fanny Brawne, May(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]³
- 36) To Fanny Brawne, June(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- 37) To Fanny Brawne, Aug.(?) 1820, [*no date in LJKFB, correct date in Gittings*]
- Also available in *Gittings* (and *Rollins*) and not in *LJKFB*:
- 38) To Fanny Brawne, May (?) 1820, [*Gittings 375-6; Rollins ii 290-1*]

³ Keats's letter of May(?) 1820, printed on p.375 in *Gittings*, is not included in *LJKFB*.

APPENDIX 5

The love-letters of Keats as they appear in *LJKFB*. As some of them do not contain a date, the first line of each letter is given to help locate them in *Gittings* (or *Rollins*).

No	Date of the Letter in <i>LJKFB</i> (and <i>Gittings</i>)	Page in <i>LJKFB</i> (and <i>Gittings</i>)	First Few Words of the First Line of the Letter
1	<i>Postmark</i> , 3 July 1819 (Shanklin, Isle of Wight, 1 July 1819)	3-7 (263-4)	I am glad I had not an opportunity
2	8 July; (8 July 1819)	8-11 (266-7)	Your Letter gave me more delight
3	<i>Postmark</i> , 27 July 1819 (25 July 1819)	12-16 (270-2)	I hope you did not blame me much ⁶⁵²
4	<i>Postmark</i> , 9 August 1819 (Shanklin, 5, 6 August 1819)	17-22 (274-6)	You say you must not have any more such Letters
5	17 August; <i>Postmark</i> , 16 August 1819 (Winchester, 16 Aug. 1819)	23-29 (277-9)	My dear Girl - what shall I say for myself?
6	<i>Postmark</i> , 14 September 1819 (Fleet Street ⁶⁵³ , 13 Sep. 1819)	30-32 (290)	I have been hurried to town by a Letter
7	<i>Postmark</i> , 11 October 1819 (College Street ⁶⁵⁴ , 11 Oct.	33-34 (333-4)	I am living today in yesterday:

⁶⁵² Keats's letter of 15(?) July 1819 written from Shanklin and printed on pp.268-270 in *Gittings*, is not included in *LJKFB*.

⁶⁵³ Written from Taylor & Hessey's office, 93 Fleet Street.

⁶⁵⁴ Westminster

	1819)		
8	<i>Postmark, 13 October 1819 (College Street, 13 Oct. 1819)</i>	35-37 (334-5)	This moment I have set myself to copy some verses
9	<i>Postmark, 19 October 1819 (Great Smith Street⁶⁵⁵, 19 Oct. 1819)</i>	38-39 (335)	On awakening from my three days dream
10	<i>No date in LJKFB (4(?) Feb. 1820)</i>	43-44 (353)	Dearest Fanny, I shall send this the moment you return.
11	<i>No date in LJKFB (10(?) Feb. 1820)</i>	45-46 (356)	If illness makes such an agreeable variety
12	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	47-48 (356-7)	My sweet love, I shall wait patiently
13	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	49-50 (357-8)	According to all appearances I am to be separated from you
14	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	51-52 (358)	My dearest Girl, how could it ever have been my wish to forget you?
15	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	53 (<i>Rollins ii, 359</i>)	Then all we have to do is to be patient.
16	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	54-55 (360-1)	I read your note in bed last night,
17	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	56-58 (361)	Do not let your mother suppose
18	<i>No date in LJKFB (Feb.(?) 1820)</i>	59-60 (<i>Rollins ii, 264</i>)	You spoke of having been unwell
19	<i>No date in</i>	61-62 (362)	Indeed I will not deceive you

⁶⁵⁵ Dilke's house.

	<i>LJKFB</i> (24(?) Feb. 1820)		
20	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (28(?) Feb. 1820)	63 (<i>Rollins</i> ii, 269)	I continue much the same as usual
21	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (29(?) Feb. 1820)	64 (364)	I think you had better not make any long stay
22	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	65-66 (364-5)	The power of your benediction
23	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	67 (<i>Rollins</i> ii, 273)	You must not stop so long in the cold--
24	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	68-70 (366-7)	You fear, sometimes, I do not love you so
25	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	71-72 (367-8)	I am much better this morning than I was
26	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	73-74 (<i>Rollins</i> ii, 276-7)	My dearest Fanny, whenever you know me
27	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	75-76 (368)	My dearest Fanny, I slept well last night
28	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (27(?) Feb. 1820)	77-79 (362-3)	I had a better night last night than I have had (according to Gittings, this letter must be no. 20, chronologically speaking)
29	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	80-81 (369)	Though I shall see you in so short a time
30	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	82 (<i>Rollins</i> ii, 281)	As, from the last part of my note
31	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	83-84 (370)	In consequence of our company
32	<i>No date in LJKFB</i> (March(?) 1820)	85-87 (<i>Rollins</i> ii, 279)	Yesterday you must have thought me worse

33	<i>No date in LJKFB (25 June(?) 1820)</i> ⁶⁵⁶	91 (383)	I endeavour to make myself as patient as possible. (according to Gittings, this letter must be no. 35, chronologically speaking)
34	<i>No date in LJKFB (4 July(?) 1820)</i>	92 (383)	For this Week Past I have been employed (according to Gittings, this letter must be no. 36, chronologically speaking)
35	<i>No date in LJKFB (May(?) 1820); Rollins (5 July (?) 1820)</i>	93-97 (376-8)	I have been a walk this morning with a book (according to Gittings, this letter must be no. 33, chronologically speaking)
36	<i>No date in LJKFB (June(?) 1820)</i>	98-103 (378-380)	My head is puzzled this morning (according to Gittings, this letter must be no. 34, chronologically speaking)
37	<i>No date in LJKFB (Aug.(?) 1820)</i>	104-107 (385-6)	I wish you could invent some means (the last letter given in both <i>LJKFB</i> and Gittings)

Also available in *Gittings* (and *Rollins*) but not in *LJKFB*:

38	May (?) 1820 ⁶⁵⁷	375-6	I wrote a Letter for you yesterday
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⁶⁵⁶ Rollins gives the date as 'June (?) 1820'; *Rollins* ii 301.

⁶⁵⁷ Written from Kentish Town, where Keats was now staying.

APPENDIX 6IN SEPULCRETIS⁶⁵⁸

“Vidistis ipso rapere de rogo coenam.”—CATULLUS, LIX. 3.

“To publish even one line of an authour which he himself has not intended for the public at large—especially letters which are addressed to private persons—is to commit a despicable act of felony.”—HEINE.

I

IT is not then enough that men who give
 The best gifts given of man to man should feel,
 Alive, a snake's head ever at their heel:
 Small hurt the worms may do them while they live—
 Such hurt as scorn for scorn's sake may forgive.
 But now, when death and fame have set one seal
 On tombs whereat Love, Grief, and Glory kneel,
 Men sift all secrets, in their critic sieve,
 Of graves wherein the dust of death might shrink
 To know what tongues defile the dead man's name
 With loathsome love, and praise that stings like shame.
 Rest once was theirs, who had crossed the mortal brink:
 No rest, no reverence now: dull fools undress
 Death's holiest shrine, life's veriest nakedness.

II

A man was born, sang, suffered, loved, and died.
 Men scorned him living: let us praise him dead.
 His life was brief and bitter, gently led
 And proudly, but with pure and blameless pride.
 He wrought no wrong toward any; satisfied
 With love and labour, whence our souls are fed
 With largesse yet of living wine and bread.
 Come, let us praise him: here is nought to hide.
 Make bare the poor dead secrets of his heart,
 Strip the stark-naked soul, that all may peer,
 Spy, smirk, sniff, snap, snort, snivel, snarl, and sneer:
 Let none so sad, let none so sacred part
 Lies still for pity, rest unstirred for shame,

⁶⁵⁸ *Poems of Swinburne* vi 85-87.

But all be scanned of all men. This is fame.

III

“Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!”⁶⁵⁹
 If one, that strutted up the brawling streets
 As foreman of the flock whose concourse greets
 Men’s ears with bray more dissonant than brass,
 Would change from blame to praise as coarse and crass
 His natural note, and learn the fawning feats
 Of lapdogs, who but knows what luck he meets?
 But all in vain old fable holds her glass.
 Mocked and reviled by men of poisonous breath,
 A great man dies: but one thing worst was spared;
 Not all his heart by their base hands lay bared.
 One comes to crown with praise the dust of death;
 And lo, through him this worst is brought to pass.
 Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!

IV

Shame, such as never yet dealt heavier stroke
 On heads more shameful, fall on theirs through whom
 Dead men may keep inviolate not their tomb,
 But all its depths these ravenous grave-worms choke.
 And yet what waste of wrath were this, to invoke
 Shame on the shameless? Even their twin-born doom,
 Their native air of life, a carrion fume,
 Their natural breath of love, a noisome smoke,
 The bread they break, the cup whereof they drink,
 The record whose remembrance damns their name,
 Smells, tastes, and sounds of nothing but of shame.
 If thankfulness nor pity bids them think
 What work is this of theirs, and pause betimes,
 Not Shakespeare’s grave would scare them off with rhymes.

⁶⁵⁹ *Titus Andronicus*, Act iv., Scene 2.

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