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978-0-521-65126-4 - The Cambridge Companion to John Keats

Edited by Susan J. Wolfson

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In *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, leading scholars discuss Keats's work in several fascinating contexts: literary history and key predecessors; Keats's life in London's intellectual, aesthetic and literary culture; the relation of his poetry to the visual arts; the critical traditions and theoretical contexts within which Keats's life and achievements have been assessed. These specially commissioned essays examine Keats's specific poetic endeavours, his striking way with language, and his lively letters as well as his engagement with contemporary cultures and literary traditions, his place in criticism, from his day to ours, including the challenge he poses to gender criticism. The contributions are sophisticated but accessible, challenging but lucid, and are complemented by an introduction to Keats's life, a chronology, a descriptive list of contemporary people and periodicals, a source-reference for famous phrases and ideas articulated in Keats's letters, a glossary of literary terms and a guide to further reading.

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JOHN KEATS

EDITED BY
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Princeton University



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*To the memory of Stuart M. Sperry, Jr.,
our companion to John Keats*

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Keats's own titles (*Sleep and Poetry*) are in italics; untitled poems conventionally known by opening phrase or line are titled with quotation marks ("I stood tip-toe").

The Letters of John Keats, ed. H. E. Rollins; cited *KL* by volume and page.

Spelling, punctuation, etc. are original; our insertions for comprehension appear [in square brackets]; Rollins's suppositions about missing letters from tears in the mss. are {in curly braces}

Keats's prose, other than letters, follows *John Keats*, ed. Elizabeth Cook.

The Keats Circle, ed. Rollins (writing by Keats's friends, family &c); cited

KC by volume and page.

Keats: The Critical Heritage, ed. G. M. Matthews (reviews and reactions); cited as *KCH*

KSJ: Keats–Shelley Journal

Works of well-known writers such as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron are not referred to any specific edition, unless there is a textual issue.

The bibliography supplies full publication information for items cited by title only in the notes and lists for further reading.

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(all examples are from Keats's poetry)

Alliteration: a repetition of consonants: "beaded bubbles winking at the brim"; "the fever and the fret."

Anagram: a word made of letters rearranged from another word: Keats takes steak; stakes Kate's skate. In "Those lips, O slippery blisses," *lips* is anagrammatically figured in the descriptive, *slippery*.

Anaphora: the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a series of poetic lines or sentences. "Faded the flower and all its budded charms, / Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes, / Faded the shape of beauty from my arms, / Faded the voice . . ."

Apollo: in Greek and Roman mythology, the god of poetry, medicine, and the sun – and so allegorically (of light), of learning, knowledge, and the arts. Keats wrote early odes of dedication to Apollo, and intended this god to be the hero of his epic, *Hyperion*.

Apostrophe: an address to a figure, usually not present, or to an object or idea, *personified* for the sake of being subject to address: "O golden-tongued Romance!"; "O Melancholy, linger here awhile! / O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!"; "O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers"; "O attic shape! Fair attitude!"

Blank verse: unrhymed; usually referring to iambic pentameter: "Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion; / His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels, / And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire."

Chiasmus: (from "chi" the Greek letter X), describing a mirrored crossing of words or syntactic units. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is almost a perfect chiasmus.

Couplet: two lines of rhymed verse. The *Shakespearean sonnet* ends with a couplet. The *heroic couplet* (so named for its use in epics featuring heroic deeds) is in rhymed iambic pentameter, usually containing a complete syntax, often with punctuated internal pauses, at the end of the first line, and / or the middle of the lines. Keats parodies this form when he writes

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“There flowers have no scent, birds no sweet song, / And great unerring Nature once seems wrong.” The *romance* or *open couplet* conspicuously violates this neoclassical form with *enjambment* and *feminine rhymes* that weaken the chime of line-endings: “And many a verse from so strange influence / That we must ever wonder how, and whence / It came. Also imaginings will hover / Round my fire-side, and haply there discover / Vistas of solemn beauty, where I’d wander / In happy silence, like the clear meander / Through its lone vales.”

Ekphrasis, *ekphrastic*: a genre of writing that describes visual art – such as a painting or a sculpture. *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles* (about sculptural fragments from the Athenian Parthenon) and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* are famous instances of this tradition.

Ellipsis: grammatical matter that is dropped from (elided within) a sentence, but tacitly understood, often by syntactic parallelism: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty” implies a second “is.”

Embedded sonnet: a paragraph, stanza, or unit within a longer verse form that has definition as a fourteen-line section, often with thematic significance. The opening paragraph of *Hyperion* is a sonnet-stanza, and similar forms appear in *Lamia*.

Enjambment: French for “striding over.” The forward push of syntax from one poetic line to the next, sometimes from one stanza to the next. This effect can be *mimetic*, as when, for example, the subject of the poetry is about flowing over a boundary: “a voice will run / From hedge to hedge.” The grammatical sentence of “It keeps eternal whisperings around / Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell / Gluts twice ten thousand caverns; till the spell / Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound” (*On the Sea*) does not end until “sound,” and it gets there by washing over all the line boundaries, with only a brief pause, like the cresting of a wave, at “caverns.” Sometimes enjambment makes metaphoric use of the blank page-space at the end of the line: in “imaginings will hover / Round my fire-side,” *hover* hovers at the end of the line, as if on an open space for imaginings to flicker, before the line rounds to *Round*.

End-stopped line: the opposite of *enjambment*, where a syntactic pause or close coincides with the termination of the poetic line, sometimes with *mimetic* effect: “Write on my tablets all that was permitted, / All that was for our human senses fitted” uses endstopped lines and endlocked rhymes to mimic the controls of permitting and fitting.

Eponym: a character whose name is given to a title – La Belle Dame, *Lamia*, *Hyperion* – or a name associated with an object or event: the Elgin Marbles, named for Lord Elgin who took them from Greece to England; the Pindaric ode, named for Pindar.

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Euphony: (“good sound”): mellifluous verse sounds, often with *mimetic* effects: “O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee close” and “shade to shade will come too drowsily, / And drown” evoke in sound the soothing drowsiness described.

Field rhyme: rhymes that chime across a field beyond the local rhyme scheme. The word that concludes stanza four of *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (“not a soul to tell / Why thou art desolate, can e’er *return*”) is such a rhyme with the last word of the ode’s title (especially since *return*’s rhyme partner in stanza four, *morn*, is a non-demanding *slant rhyme*). That this ode follows right after *Ode to a Nightingale* in the 1820 volume allows a further afiel rhyme (between the poems) of *Urn*’s “tell” with an end-word that chimes a related moment of recognition in *Nightingale*: “Forlorn! the very word is like a bell.”

Homophone: “same sound”: “Here were men sit and *hear* each other groan.”

Internal rhyme (or echo): a consonance within a line: “Aye, by that *kiss*, I vow an endless *bliss*.” In “not to the sensual ear, but, more endear’d,” *ear* (with *mimetic* suggestion) gets an internal echo in “endear’d”; in “At tender *eye*-dawn of aureorean love: / The winged boy I knew,” the awakened *eye* rhymes internally with the cognizant *I*; in “E’en like the passage of an angel’s *tear* / That falls through the *clear* ether silently,” the *enjambment*, the internal link of *tear* and *clear*, and the fall of the *ear*-sound into a faint echo in *ether* all convey the sense of the simile (“like . . .”), of a silent passing through the air.

Inversion: a reversal of normal syntactic order: “Oft of one wide expanse had I been told”; “Then felt I”; “Fled is that music”; “Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees.”

Liaison: a sliding of sound from one word or syllable to the next: “*lead*-eyed *despairs*”; “*leaf*-fring’d”; “dost *tease*.” This effect can be intensified with *sibilance*: “perilous seas” “the wheels sweep / Around”; “incense sweet”; “endless sleep.” In “Those *lips*, O *slippery* blisses,” a *liaison* of *s* and *l* slips into the sound of “those lips.”

Mimetic effects: words or their arrangement enacting what they describe. Sound, for example may imitate (“mime”) sense (“Those lips, O slippery blisses”). Meter can be mimetic: as one says “Thou *foster child* of *silence and slow time*,” the iambic tempo is forced into slow time by three stressed syllables of “and slow time.” See *spondee*.

Neologism: a “new word,” sometimes coined by joining known words (“worldwind” in *On a Dream*; in *The Fall of Hyperion*, “fault” and “failure” joined to make “fauture”); sometimes by giving new forms (in *The Fall*, “realmless,” “nerveless,” “unsceptered”), or new uses (in *The Fall*, “mourn” as a noun).

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Octave: an eight-line unit of verse, most often describing the first unit of a sonnet's fourteen lines. In the *Italian* or *Petrarchan* form, the octave is identified by a distinct rhyme scheme (such as *abba, abba*), sometimes a separate stanza. It articulates a phase of thought or description to which the second part of the sonnet, the *sestet* reacts or responds.

Ode: a verse form dating from classical times, when it was sung by a chorus at public events, with three basic movements, a *strophe* (sung while the chorus moves in one direction), an *antistrophe* (sung while it moves in the opposite direction) and an *epode* (sung while it stands still); often these movements correspond to motions of thought or feeling. In the *Pindaric* or regular ode, from Greek poet Pindar (fifth-century BC), the strophes and antistrophes have the same stanza form, the epode another. The regular or *Horatian* ode, named for Roman poet Horace, uses stanzas of the same length and rhyme scheme (Keats's odes favor this form). In the irregular ode, popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English poetry, regular stanza forms are dispensed with, to give the illusion of verse being shaped by intense or sublimely inspired feeling.

Pentameter: a verse line with "five measures" (metrical feet), the most common being *iambic* (a "foot" with an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable): "The *day* is gone, and *all* its *sweets* are gone!"; "Away! away! for I will fly to *thee*."

Personification: the representation of an idea or an object as if a person, such as addressing a Grecian Urn as a "bride of quietness", or a "sylvan historian," or Autumn as a harvester.

Petrarchan: derived from fourteenth-century Italian poet Francesco Petrarca, the adjective names a *sonnet* form he made famous and an attendant set of conventions and conceits (images) for love poetry: the beloved lady as beautiful, enchanting, and cruel; the poet-lover as devoted, enthralled, in torment. She is a goddess; he is a stricken deer. She shines afar; he burns.

Quatrain: a four-line stanza or a verse unit with a distinct rhyme pattern, such as *abab, abba, abaa*. The first twelve lines of a *Shakespearean sonnet* are patterned as three quatrains, usually rhymed *abab, cdcd, efef*.

Rhyme, feminine: the pairing of metrically unstressed syllables (sometimes muted further by *enjambment*) that orthodox principles of prosody tend to regard as weak: "Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry; / For while I muse, the lance points slantingly / Athwart the morning air."

masculine: a chime of metrically stressed syllables: "O that our dreamings all of sleep or *wake* / Would all their colours from the sunset *take*."

slant (also called "off" or "sight"): an internal or end rhyme in which the vowel sounds (even when, as is "form" / "worm," the letters line up)

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are slightly off. The *quatrain* that opens stanza two of *Ode on a Grecian Urn* makes poetic capital out of rhymes dissonant to the ear: “Heard melodies are sweet, but those *unheard* / Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play *on*; / Not to the sensual ear, but, more *endear’d*, / Pipe to the spirit ditties of no *tone*.”

Sometimes, as in this case, rhyme may be *semantic*, making a point about the principles of rhyming or their frustration. What isn’t heard may play to the eye: in the *slant*-rhyme above, the *ear* within both “*unheard*” and “*endear’d*” and the “*tone*” that gets no sound-rhyme are the point. The eye, furthermore, may play on the letters to enjoy the *chiasmus* of “on / No[t]” and the *liaison* of “Not to . . . no tone.” Or a couplet may be about echoes, pairings, matchings that echo, pair, or match. In “‘Fool!’ said the sophist, in an under-tone / Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan / From Lycius answer’d,” the word “moan” answers in sound and sense the sophist’s “under-tone.” In “And the stars they glisten, glisten, / Seeming with bright eyes to listen” the rhyme asks our eyes to look and our ears to listen in order to see “listen” inside “glisten.”

Sestet: a six-line verse unit, and in a *Petrarchan sonnet*, the last six lines, in a rhyme pattern distinct from that of the first eight (the *octave*).

Sibilance: The hissing of *s* sounds: “the airy stress / Of music’s kiss.” “His silent sandals swept the mossy green.”

Sonnet: There are two main traditions for this fourteen-line poem, as well as a genre of writing meta-sonnets (sonnets on “the sonnet”). The Italian or *Petrarchan* (from Italian poet Francesco Petrarca) sonnet has an *octave* (*abba abba*) and a *sestet* (*cdcdcd* and *cdecde* are the most common) and sometimes a stanza break. *On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer* and *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles* are *Petrarchan*. This structure often involves a two-part drama, the octave posing a question or dilemma, or describing a situation, to which the sestet responds. A *Shakespearean* sonnet deploys three *quatrains* (sometimes with a hint of the Petrarch *octave* in the first two) and a *couplet*, usually a pithy summation of a situation unfolded across the quatrains. A common rhyme scheme is *abab cdcd efef gg*. “When I have fears,” “The day is gone,” and “I cry your mercy” are in this form.

Spondee: a stressed syllable substituted into a metrical pattern where an unstressed one would occur – often to enhance sense with sound effects: “And *no birds sing*”; “thou *foster child* of *silence and slow time*”; “But *where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest*”; “And *feed deep, deep* upon her peerless eyes” (a feeding of sound that persists into *peerless*).

Substantive: a noun, or noun form of a word familiar as another part of speech. When Endymion calls to his dream goddess, “Speak, delicious

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fair!" *fair*, normally an adjective, is made a substantive, as if to convey the sense of real being that Endymion has felt in his dream.

Synaesthesia: evoking one kind of sensory experience with another. "What soft incense hangs upon the boughs" images smell as tactile (soft) and substantive (with material weight). In *Lamia* the disordering of senses is part of the serpent-woman's seduction of her prey: "delicious were the words she sung" blends the pleasures of hearing and tasting; "soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up" matches the seduction, blending sight into tasting.

Tetrameter: a "four-measure" line: "She *found* me *roots* of *relish* *sweet*, / And *honey* *wild*, and *manna* *dew*."

Trimeter: a "three-measure" line: "Upon the *midnight* *hours*."

Trochee: a metrical unit formed of a stressed then an unstressed syllable. Trochaic variations often appear at the start of an iambic pentameter line: "Forest on forest *hung* above his *head*"; "Full on this *casement* *shone* the wintry *moon*"; "Thou wast not *born* for *death*, immortal *Bird*!"

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Keats's poetry is so familiar that it seems to have a life of its own, decorating the walls of the world's most prestigious libraries and reading rooms, endowing book titles and popular songs: "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"; "tender is the night"; "Beauty is truth; truth Beauty." This cultural presence is all the more remarkable, given the short career of its poet, and his decidedly local, though enthusiastic recognition during his lifetime. Keats's life as a poet was brief. He wrote his first poem, as a medical student, in 1814; his last effort may have been his revision of his sonnet "Bright Star" in September 1820, while he was on board a ship to Italy, where he would die early the next year. "Oh, for ten years, that I may overwhelm / Myself in poesy," he prayed in 1816 (*Sleep and Poetry*). Not even claiming a decade, Keats's life as a writer had come to a close by his twenty-fifth birthday. At the same age, Chaucer and Spenser had yet to write anything, and if Shakespeare had died at twenty-four, he would be known only (if at all) by a few early works. Victorian sage Thomas Carlyle was born the same year as Keats. What if Keats had been given the same span, of tens and tens of years, not dying until 1881? The fascination of Keats is still deeply involved in this poignancy of genius nipped in the bud, of unknown potential. Would he have stayed with poetry, having hit his stride with the 1820 volume – *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn, Ode on Melancholy, To Autumn*, and the spectacular fragment of *Hyperion*? Would he have followed his dream to write modern drama? Might he, as his lively letters suggest, have developed a talent for the personal essay, or even the novel? Would he have become a political journalist (also a possibility he entertained)?

Keats's origins were relatively inauspicious. He was the eldest of four children, their father an ostler who married the owner's daughter of a livery-stabler, then inherited the suburban London business. Just after Keats began his studies at the progressive Enfield Academy, his father died in a riding accident, then his mother quickly remarried. Her affection for her children was

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as erratic as it was doting, and Keats was devastated when, apparently miserable in her second hasty marriage, she disappeared, abandoning the children to their grandmother. When she returned four years later, sick and consumptive, Keats devoted himself to her care; she died when he was fourteen. The shocks of this bewildering flux of events would be perpetually registered in the series of adored and adoring but inconstant women in his later poetry. Keats found solace and escape in the excitements of his education. At Enfield he was tutored and befriended by Charles Cowden Clarke, the headmaster's son, who introduced him to literature, music, the theater – and eventually to the London and suburban literary culture in which Keats's aspirations as a poet took root and flourished.

After Keats's mother died, the children were remanded to the legal guardianship of a practical businessman whose chief concern was to apprentice the boys to some viable trade and to keep their young sister from their influence. He apprenticed Keats to a surgeon in the grim days before anesthesia. Keats was soon enrolled as a student at one of the progressive London hospitals and stayed with his medical training long enough to earn his license as an apothecary (a kind of general practitioner), but he did not let go of the love of literature developed at Enfield, and frequently escaped his medical studies to read and to write poetry. The poets that mattered most to him were Spenser (his first poem, written in 1814, is a deft *Imitation of Spenser* in Spenserian stanzas), Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Chatterton, and among his contemporaries, Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, and Byron. When he came of age in 1817, he gave up medicine to seek a career as a poet. By this point, Keats was already enjoying the society of Clarke and his circle of politically progressive thinkers, artists, poets, journalists, and publishers, many of whom became close friends. One of the hubs of this culture was radical journalist and poet Leigh Hunt, who launched Keats's career, publishing his first sonnets in his weekly paper, *The Examiner*, and advertising him in a critical essay as one of the age's rising "Young Poets." It was through him that Keats met some of the chief non-establishment writers of the day – Wordsworth, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Percy Shelley – and the controversial painter Benjamin Robert Haydon.

In 1817 Keats's first volume, simply titled *Poems*, was published. Its themes – great poets and poetic greatness; political values; views of imagination; an enthusiasm for classical mythology – were advanced in a performance of poetic skill and versatility. In addition to twenty sonnets (many previously in *The Examiner*) there were Spenserian stanzas, odes, verse epistles, romance fragments, and meditative long poems. Keats warmly dedicated the volume to Hunt, and in its long concluding piece, a poetic essay titled *Sleep and Poetry*, he boldly took to task "the foppery and barbarism,"

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“musty laws,” and “wretched rule” of a still prestigious eighteenth-century neoclassical poetry. Byron despised Keats for this tirade, and it made him a ready target for the conservative literary critics of the Tory journals, only too eager to jab at their enemy Hunt through his protégé. Appearing in a year when civil rights were weakened and radical publisher William Hone was brought to trial, *Poems* was ridiculed in terms marked by social snobbery and political prejudice: Keats was one of Hunt’s tribe of “Cockney Poets” – vulgar suburban upstarts, enemies of Church and State. Though he had anticipated this reception, he was still stung.

Yet he was determined to persevere, and immediately took on a major challenge, its genesis a contest with Hunt and Shelley to see who could finish a 4,000-line poem by the end of 1817. Keats was the only one to succeed, with *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, which he regarded as “a test” or “trial” of his talents, his chance to advance his career with a strong credential. “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever” begins this tale of a shepherd-prince who dreams of a goddess, and on waking is profoundly alienated from ordinary life in the world. In the 4,000-plus lines of this romance epic – the longest poem Keats ever wrote – the hero, after several ordeals, finally gets the girl and they seem destined to live happily ever after. By the time Keats was reading the poem for press, however, he had lost confidence in its fable, and said so in his Preface, describing the poem as a work of “inexperience, immaturity,” indeed a “failure” that made him “regret” its publication. Whether this Preface was an honest confession or a tactic to forestall another round of ridicule, the same reviewers who had hooted at Keats’s debut were waiting to savage *Endymion*. But the effect was less to discourage Keats than to confirm what he called “my own domestic criticism.” He thought the poem “slipshod,” and was convinced the most powerful poets did not write escapist, “golden-tongued Romance” but embraced the “fierce dispute” of life in the world – terms he used as he was rereading Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. His curriculum in 1818 included not only this tragedy but also Hazlitt’s lectures on English poetry, *Paradise Lost*, *Hamlet* (Keats once said he thought he had read this play forty times), and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in Henry Cary’s recent translation. He was still irritated by Wordsworth’s didacticism and egotism, but he also recognized that Wordsworth was working out a profoundly modern sense of the “dark Passages” of life – the pains, heartbreaks, and oppression that no simple romance (such as *Endymion*) nor any simplistic moral philosophy (so Keats understood *Paradise Lost*) could argue away.

It was in this temper that Keats began a second epic, a deliberate revision of Milton. The intended hero of *Hyperion* was Apollo, the god of knowledge, poetry, and medicine – a linkage dear to Keats. The most powerful and

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most deeply felt poetry he wrote, however – in the two books completed – described the painful bewilderment of the fallen Titan clan and Hyperion’s incipient anxiety about his impending fate. When Keats started to write of Hyperion’s designated successor, Apollo, he lost inspiration. Could the “Knowledge enormous” that the god of poetry claimed to gain “all at once” be reconciled with the poet’s own acute sympathy with the very mortal pain of his beloved brother Tom, dying of tuberculosis, the disease that had killed their mother and that would claim Keats himself three years later (already he was suffering from a chronically sore throat)? Tom died at the end of 1818, and Keats, almost instinctively by now, again sought relief in his poetry, but put aside *Hyperion*. In a burst of inspiration that lasted well into the fall of 1819 (when he returned to *Hyperion*), he produced his most admired work: *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *La Belle Dame*, *Lamia*, all the Great Odes, and a clutch of brilliant sonnets including “Bright Star.” Unlike most of his contemporaries, he wrote no theoretical prefaces and defenses, no self-promoting polemics, no critical essays, but he did write letters, ones that reflect a critical intelligence as brilliant as the poetic talent. A number of Keats’s formulations therein – among them, “Negative Capability,” “the egotistical sublime,” truth “proved upon our pulses” – have entered the syntax of literary criticism and theory. From their first publication (several in 1848), Keats’s letters have been admired for their wit and playfulness, their generosity and candor, and their insight and critical penetration.

Just as Keats’s poetic talents were generating this incredible body of work, his health went into decline, and he suffered a major pulmonary hemorrhage early in 1820. With the force of his medical training, he read his “death warrant” and was devastated about lost prospects. Despite the shaky reception of his first two volumes, he was (understandably) optimistic about the forthcoming one and full of enthusiasm for new writing (journalism or plays). He was also in love with the girl next door, Fanny Brawne, whom he hoped to marry once he was financially capable. But his doctors told him he could not survive another English winter, and so in September 1820 he sailed for Italy. He died at the end of the next February, four months after his twenty-fifth birthday – far from Fanny Brawne, far from his friends, and in such despair of what he had accomplished that he asked his tombstone to read “Here lies one whose name was writ in water.” He did live long enough to see some favorable reviews of his 1820 volume. The mythology Shelley sympathetically advanced in *Adonais*, of a young sensitive poet slain by hostile reviews, though it would often be retold as if the truth, could not have been further from it. “This is a mere matter of the moment,” Keats assured his brother George after his first reviews, adding, “I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death.”

CHRONOLOGY

JK: John Keats FK: Fanny Keats
 GK: George Keats TK: Tom Keats

- 1795 John Keats born, 31 October to Frances Jennings Keats and Thomas Keats, chief ostler at the Swan and Hoop inn, owned by Frances's father. Famine in England (high prices, scarcity); Napoleon's army moves into Italy.
- 1796 M. Lewis, *The Monk*; M. Robinson, *Sappho and Phaon*. Death of Robert Burns.
- 1797 George Keats born. H. F. Cary, *Ode to General Kosciusko*.
- 1798 Battle of the Nile; Irish Rebellion; *Lyrical Ballads* (Wordsworth and Coleridge).
- 1799 Tom Keats born. Napoleon returns to France and in a coup d'état becomes first consul; Religious Tract Society formed; Six Acts against the formation of political societies, anti-union Combination Acts.
- 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* 2nd edn (with Preface); first collected edition of Burns. Union of England and Ireland; Alessandro Volta produces electricity from a cell.
- 1801 Edward Keats born, dies before his fourth birthday. First census; Pitt resigns after George III refuses Catholic Emancipation. Thomas Moore, *The Wreath and the Chain*.
- 1802 Founded: Cobbett's *Weekly Political Register*; *Edinburgh Review*; the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Peace of Amiens between England and France; France reoccupies Switzerland; Napoleon made First Consul for life.
 Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.
- 1803 Fanny Keats born; GK and JK enroll at John Clarke's Enfield Academy.
 England declares war on France; British capture Delhi, India. Lord

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Elgin brings sculptural fragments from the Athenian parthenon to England.

- 1804 April: JK's father dies; June: mother remarries. The children go to live with their mother's parents, the Jenningses.

Pitt becomes Prime Minister; Napoleon crowned Emperor and prepares to invade England; Britain declares war on Spain. First Corn Laws (protective taxation of imported grain); Beethoven's *Eroica*.

- 1805 Grandfather Jennings dies.

Scott, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Hazlitt, *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*. Nelson dies in the naval battle with France at Trafalgar; French victory over Austria and Russia.

- 1806 Scott, *Ballads and Lyrical Pieces*; Bowles' edition of Pope. End of the Holy Roman Empire; deaths of Pitt and Fox; Napoleon closes Continental ports to British ships and defeats Prussia at Jena.

- 1807 Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes*; Moore, *Irish Melodies*; Byron, *Hours of Idleness*. French invasion of Spain and Portugal. Peninsular Campaign begins. Abolition of slave trade in England.

- 1808 *Edinburgh Review* ridicules Byron's *Hours of Idleness*. Leigh Hunt becomes editor of *The Examiner*. Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. Spanish uprising (May); Convention of Cintra (August).

- 1809 Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Gifford becomes editor of *The Quarterly Review*. Peninsular war in Spain. Napoleon beaten by the Austrians.

- 1810 JK's mother dies from tuberculosis; grandmother Jennings appoints John Sandall and Richard Abbey as the children's guardians. Leigh Hunt edits *The Reflector*.

- 1811 JK leaves Enfield and is apprenticed to Edmonton surgeon and apothecary Thomas Hammond; GK becomes a clerk at Abbey's counting-house.

Prince of Wales becomes Regent, after George III deemed incompetent. Luddite riots against the weaving frames. National Society for the Education of the Poor founded. Lord Elgin offers to sell the British government his Greek Marbles, and public debate ensues, about their acquisition, their value, and the prospect of costly purchase. Shelley, *The Necessity of Atheism*; Mary Tighe, *Psyche; or the Legend of Love* (privately printed, 1805); Leigh Hunt, *The Feast of the Poets*, in *The Reflector*.

- 1812 Byron's "maiden" speech in the House of Lords opposes the Frame-Breaking Bill, which prescribed the death penalty; his epic romance,

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Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, is an overnight sensation; Canto II opens with a diatribe against Lord Elgin as a thief and pirate. Britain declares war on US; Napoleon invades Russia in June and retreats from Moscow at the end of the year, with catastrophic losses.

- 1813 Byron becomes a celebrity in London society, has major commercial successes with his poetic romances *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*. Coleridge's play *Remorse* is a success. Southey publishes *Life of Nelson*, becomes Poet Laureate; Wordsworth gets a government patronage position; Leigh Hunt publishes *The Prince of Wales v. The Examiner* (defending *The Examiner's* attacks on the policies of the Prince Regent) and is imprisoned for libel. Lamb, *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*; Shelley, *Queen Mab*.

Austria joins the Alliance against France; Napoleon defeated at Leipzig.

- 1814 JK writes his first poems, including *Imitation of Spenser*, a sonnet *On Peace* (to celebrate the end of war with France), and a sonnet *To Lord Byron*. After grandmother Jennings dies in December, FK goes to live with the Abbeyes.

Byron's *The Corsair* sells 10,000 on the day of publication. H. F. Cary's translation of *The Divine Comedy*; Wordsworth, *The Excursion* (criticized by Hazlitt in *The Examiner* for "egotism"); Reynolds, *Safie, An Eastern Tale*, *The Eden of Imagination*; Hunt, new version of *The Feast of the Poets*; Shelley, *A Refutation of Deism*. Edmund Kean's debut at Covent Garden; Charles Brown's *Narensky* a success at Drury Lane theater.

The Allies invade France; Napoleon abdicates and is exiled; the Bourbons restored. P. B. Shelley elopes to the Continent with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin.

- 1815 2 February: *Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison*; also February: *To Hope*, *Ode to Apollo*. October: Guy's Hospital as a student and becomes a surgeon's dresser (assistant); November: verse epistle to George Felton Mathew.

Four-volume edition of Byron's poems; Wordsworth's collected poems, including the fully titled version of *Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*; Hunt, *The Descent of Liberty, a Mask*.

Napoleon escapes from Elba; battle of Waterloo; Napoleon exiled; restoration of the French monarchy. Corn Bill passed, with enormous benefits to landlords. Resumption of agitation for Parliamentary reform. Parliamentary debates about Britain's purchase of the Elgin Marbles (from the Athenian Parthenon).

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1816 JK meets Haydon and Reynolds; June: sonnet, “To one who has been long in city pent”; July: passes exam qualifying him for practice as apothecary, physician, surgeon; July–August: vacations with TK at the coastal village of Margate; writes sonnet and verse-epistle to GK; September: verse-epistle *To Charles Cowden Clarke*; JK, TK, and GK living together in Hampstead; October: JK meets Leigh Hunt, who puts *O Solitude* (written late 1815) in *The Examiner*, JK’s first publication; writes *On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer*; November: visits Haydon’s studio and writes a sonnet “Great Spirits”; October–December: *Sleep and Poetry*; December: “I stood tip-toe”; Hunt features him, Shelley, and Reynolds in his “Young Poets” article in *Examiner*, where he quotes the sonnet on Chapman’s Homer entire; sonnet-writing contest with Hunt produces “The poetry of the earth is never dead.” Abbey becomes the Keats children’s sole guardian.

In *The Examiner*: Haydon’s defense of the Elgin Marbles (March); Hazlitt, *On Gusto* (May) and defense of the Marbles (June); Hunt’s verse-epistles to Moore and Hazlitt (June–July); Wordsworth’s *To B. R. Haydon* (also in *The Champion*); Hunt, *The Story of Rimini*; Hazlitt, *Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft*; Shelley, *Alastor &c*; Reynolds, *The Naiad*; Coleridge, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*. Byron leaves England amidst the scandal over his separation from Lady Byron. Byron, *The Prisoner of Chillon &c* and *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage III*; at a bookseller’s dinner, publisher Murray sells 7,000 copies of each volume. Elgin Marbles are purchased by the government and displayed in the British Museum; prosecution of William Hone (tried in 1817); Spa Field Riots.

1817 JK meets Charles Brown and Richard Woodhouse. January: dines at Horace Smith’s, with P. Shelley, Hunt, and Haydon. February: socializes with the Shelleys and the Hunts; Hunt shows some of JK’s poetry to Shelley, Hazlitt, and Godwin, and publishes sonnets *To Kosciusko* and “After dark vapours” in *The Examiner*. March: JK and TK move to Hampstead, north of London; Haydon takes JK to see the Elgin Marbles; JK’s two sonnets on the occasion are published *The Champion* and *The Examiner* (also the sonnet, “This pleasant tale”); *Poems* published by the Ollier brothers, warmly reviewed by Reynolds in *The Champion*. April–November: writing *Endymion*. April: visits Isle of Wight, studies Shakespeare, writes *On the Sea* (in *The Champion* in August). June–July: Hunt’s review of *Poems* in *The Examiner*; August: finishes *Endymion II*; September: with Bailey at Oxford, working on *Endymion III*, reading Katherine Phillips’s

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poetry and *The Round Table*; TK and GK in Paris; October: visits Stratford-on-Avon with Bailey, *Monthly Repository* publishes his and Hunt's "grasshopper and cricket" sonnets; sees Shelley again; taking mercury, perhaps for venereal disease. November: reads Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), finishes *Endymion*; December: at Drury Lane sees Kean in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and writes a review for the *Champion*; sees Benjamin West's paintings at the Royal Academy; discusses "Negative Capability"; Haydon's "immortal dinner" where JK and Lamb drink a toast against Isaac Newton; meets Wordsworth.

Byron, *Manfred*; Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*; Hazlitt and Hunt, *The Round Table*; Southey, *Wat Tyler* (written in the 1790s), published by his enemies to embarrass the Poet Laureate with his revolutionary work. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* founded; in October it prints Z.'s first "Cockney School" paper, attacking Hunt, and targeting JK.

Habeas Corpus suspended; Hone tried for blasphemous libel for parodies of the liturgy. Death of Princess Charlotte from complications in the delivery of a stillborn child; death of Polish patriot Kosciuszko, who also fought in US Revolutionary War.

- 1818 January: JK visits Wordsworth and recites the "Hymn to Pan" from *Endymion*; goes to theater, and dines often with Haydon; writes sonnet on re-reading *King Lear*, attends (–February) Hazlitt's lectures on English Poetry, published later this year; corrects proof for *Endymion* (–February); February: begins *Isabella; or The Pot of Basil*; writes "Time's sea" and *To the Nile*; at Hunt's, sees the Shelleys, and meets Peacock, Hogg, and Byron's erstwhile mistress Claire Claremont; reading Voltaire and Gibbon; March: writes preface to *Endymion* and returns proofs; verse-epistle to Reynolds. March–April: at Teignmouth (resort) with TK, who had a bad haemorrhage in March. April: Reynolds and his publishers (Taylor and Hessey) reject the preface to *Endymion*; the two sonnets on the Elgin Marbles are reprinted in *Annals of the Fine Arts*; *Endymion* (with new preface) published; April: finishes *Isabella*; May: writes "Mother of Hermes" (sonnet-ode), and a long and revealing letter to Reynolds (comparing Wordsworth and Milton, describing life as a "Mansion of Many Apartments"), *Hymn to Pan* published in *The Yellow Dwarf*, dines with Hazlitt at Haydon's; GK marries Georgiana Wylie and they leave for America (they would make JK an uncle twice in his lifetime); *Blackwood's* sharpens its aim on JK as a target. June: nasty review of *Poems* in *The British Critic*;

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June–August: walking tour of the Lake District and Scotland with Brown, visiting Wordsworth’s home and Burns’s tomb, climbing Ben Nevis; JK reading Cary’s translation of *The Divine Comedy*; describes his “gordian complication” of feelings about women to Bailey; a sore throat and chills force his return to London, where he finds TK very ill; meets Fanny Brawne. September: Z.’s attack on Keats (“Cockney Paper” IV) in *Blackwood’s*; *The Quarterly Review* ridicules *Endymion*; JK trying to write *Hyperion* while nursing TK and thinking of Fanny Brawne. October: Reynolds praises *Endymion* in a minor journal (Hunt republishes it in *Examiner*) and urges JK to publish *Isabella* to show his progress; JK formulates his notion of “the camelion Poet” as distinguished from the poet of the “wordsworthian or egotistical sublime,” along with a notion of poetry as “speculation” rather than the statements of a “virtuous philosopher”; to Keats’s embarrassment, Hunt prints *The Human Seasons* and *To Ailsa Rock* in *Literary Pocket-Book*, an annual he edited. December: TK dies; JK, exhausted and suffering from a bad sore throat, accepts Brown’s invitation to live with him at Wentworth Place, Hampstead; the Brawnes rent Brown’s half for the summer. By December, JK and Fanny Brawne are in love.

Byron, *Childe Harold IV*; P. Shelley; *The Revolt of Islam*; Scott, *Rob Roy*; Hunt, *Foliage, or Poems Original and Translated*; Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets* and *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq.*, in *The Examiner*. Radical publisher Richard Carlile tried and imprisoned. Habeas Corpus restored.

- 1819 Throughout the year, JK is beset with financial problems; Haydon continues to pester him for loans. January: *The Eve of St. Agnes*; February: *The Eve of St. Mark*; April: the Brawnes move into Dilke’s half of Wentworth place, becoming next-door neighbors. March: JK visits the British Museum with Joseph Severn; reads Hazlitt’s attack on Gifford, *The Quarterly’s* editor; also reading Thomas Moore, Beaumont and Fletcher. March: gets a black eye playing cricket; Severn’s miniature of him exhibited at the Royal Academy. April: meets Coleridge and they talk of nightingales; *La Belle Dame*, *Ode to Psyche*, “If by dull rhymes.” May: *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode on Melancholy*, *Ode on Indolence*; sets aside *Hyperion*, describes the world as “a vale of Soul-making,” a more satisfying existential vision than the Christian one, JK says; burns old letters and returns all books he has borrowed. July: *Ode to a Nightingale* in *Annals of the Fine Arts*. July–August: JK at Isle of Wight with Brown, working on *Otho the Great* with him; writing

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CHRONOLOGY

Lamia and *The Fall of Hyperion*, a revision and recasting of the poem set aside earlier this year. September: at Winchester; writes *To Autumn*, and “give[s] up” on *Hyperion*; reads Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. October: sonnet “The day is gone.” November: reading Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, decides not to publish anything he has written. November: *King Stephen*; “I cry your mercy” (sonnet), reworking *Hyperion*. December: *Otho* accepted by Drury Lane for the next season; worsening sore throat; engagement to Fanny Brawne.

Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*; Cary’s translation of Dante republished by Taylor and Hessey; Byron, *Don Juan I–II*; Childe Harold’s *Pilgrimage I–IV*; Wordsworth, *Peter Bell* and *The Waggoner*; Reynolds’s satire, *Peter Bell, A Lyrical Ballad*, appears in advance of the poem itself. Hunt edits *The Indicator*. Scathing review of Shelley’s *The Revolt of Islam* in *The Quarterly*, with a vicious attack on Shelley’s character; Shelley also publishes *The Cenci* to outraged reviews (blasphemy, incest).

August: “Peterloo Massacre” – a militia charge on a peaceful worker’s demonstration for fairer Parliamentary representation, at which Henry “Orator” Hunt, the champion of reform, is arrested; the controversy plays for weeks afterwards in the London papers; September: H. Hunt’s triumphant entry into London, witnessed by JK; December: the Six Acts (abridging freedom of assembly, speech, and print). William Parry’s Arctic expedition.

1820 January: GK in London to raise funds from Tom’s estate, and probably compromises JK’s claim; this is the last time JK sees GK, and he stops writing to him after he leaves; *Ode on a Grecian Urn* in *Annals of the Fine Arts*; sends *Otho* to Covent Garden. February: JK suffers severe haemorrhage, reads his “death warrant,” is housebound for weeks. March: revises *Lamia*; Haydon exhibits *Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem*, with Keats depicted in the crowd. April: *London Magazine* praises *Endymion*. May: when Brown rents out his half of Wentworth place, JK has to move; Hunt publishes *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* in *The Indicator*. June: JK has an attack of blood-coughing, and moves to Leigh Hunt’s home for care; Hunt published *On a Dream* in *Indicator*.

July: JK’s last lifetime volume, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and other Poems* (including the fragment of *Hyperion*, the odes of spring 1919, *To Autumn*). *Ode To a Nightingale*, *To Autumn*, and other poems published in *Literary Gazette*; *To Autumn* also in the *London Chronicle*; Lamb’s praise of *Lamia &c* in *New Times* is reprinted by Hunt in *The Examiner*. August: Francis Jeffrey,