



PROJECT MUSE®

Shelley's Adonais and John Keats

Kelvin Everest

Essays in Criticism, Volume 57, Number 3, July 2007, pp. 237-264 (Article)

Published by Oxford University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/219002>

Shelley's *Adonais* and John Keats

KELVIN EVEREST

ADONAI'S DIFFERS from other English elegies in celebrating its subject throughout as a more important poet than the author, which is what Shelley really judged Keats to be.¹ The poem is a courteously elaborated compliment to its subject as a poet who, it is anticipated, is about to take his place among the major English poets of both past and present, whose tradition he has embodied and sustained. In *Adonais* conception, form, style, imagery, and allusion are all to be understood as in graceful honour of the dead.² The elegy's formal Greek dress and densely allusive classicism are in civilised rebuke of the attacks on Keats and his supposed upstart and unlearned poetic pretensions in the Tory *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, the *British Critic*, and the *Quarterly Review*, which had sneered at him as a Cockney guttersnipe.³ Keats's longest published poem, *Endymion*, with its sustained immersion in material from Greek myth, had been singled out for ridicule, and Shelley particularly admired the equally Grecian *Hyperion*, which he considered a work of genius. The predominant classical element in Shelley's elegy derives from its subtle pattern of allusion to the Greek pastoral elegies of Bion and Moschus, the *Lament for Adonis* and the *Lament for Bion*. Shelley had translated parts of both these poems, and his version of Bion has an emotional intensity which suggests that it may already have carried for him a special association with the death of his son William: Shelley's and Mary's grief for their son, and his place of burial in the same cemetery as Keats, are referred to in *Adonais*, stanzas xlix and li. The

Essays in Criticism Vol. 57 No. 3

© The Author [2007]. Published by Oxford University Press; all rights reserved.

For permissions, please email journals.permissions@oupjournals.org

doi: 10.1093/escrit/cgm013

second anniversary of William Shelley's death (he died aged 3 in Rome) was 7 June, a day which fell in the composition period of *Adonais*, and it may be that grief for William imports an emotional charge into the elegy for Keats, with whom Shelley was never more than an acquaintance with shared friends.⁴

Shelley's elegy offers numerous echoes of Bion and Moschus, in its diction and phrasing, and in passages of sustained paraphrase. *Adonais* also incorporates various formulaic elements of pastoral elegy and poetic conventions of mourning. The dominant presence of Bion and Moschus is mixed with more glancing or implicit evocations of other major presences in the classical tradition of pastoral elegy, including Theocritus and Virgil, and beyond such specific evocations Shelley's poem is characterised by a pervasive classicism of style, allusion, phrasing, and general manner. This manner incorporates Latin tags from Horace, stylistic traits and epithets from Virgil and Ovid, Greek puns in the tradition of Socrates' etymologies in the *Cratylus*, and a learned insider's ease of frequent reference to Greek philosophy (especially Platonic philosophy), to myth, and to the canon of Greek literature. The effect extends to the very appearance, paratexts and incidentals of the poem's first printing in Pisa, closely supervised by Shelley himself: the title page offers an untranslated Greek epigraph from Plato; when the page is turned the Preface is again headed by four lines of untranslated Greek with the scholarly attribution 'Moschus, Epitaph. Bion'; and the poem itself then proceeds at a stately and heavily punctuated slow pace, highly unusual for Shelley,⁵ with each carefully and beautifully printed stanza numbered in Roman capitals. The ornately posed classicism of the rhetoric of *Adonais* not only draws heavily on Shelley's profound and sophisticated immersion in classical culture, but deliberately celebrates Keats's claims to classic status, and honours in ceremonially formal terms the seriousness and scale of his achievement.

Adonais bases its central narrative situation, the mourning of Urania for Adonais, on Bion's source-story, the grief of Venus for Adonis. The mythical Adonis is a vegetation spirit whose association with the cycle of death and rebirth in nature offers Shelley's poem a powerful charge of resonance and implication, but in its specific handling of these materials the elegy is primarily

concentrated in a literary idiom. In the fertility myth Venus loves a young boy, Adonis, who is killed by a boar. Her tears revive him, but he returns to life only in summer, sleeping on flowers for the rest of the year with Persephone in the underworld. English poetic treatments of the story directly relevant to Shelley's purposes in *Adonais* include Spenser's, in *The Faerie Queene* II. vi. 29-49, and Keats's own handling of it in *Endymion* ii. 387-533. The fertility myth of a boy loved by a goddess, killed by a savage beast, and sleeping or waking with the seasonal life of Nature, parallels the fate of Keats, loved by the Muse, killed by a Tory reviewer, but whose body is re-absorbed into the vitality of Nature and whose spirit lives on with the 'enduring dead'. This narrative connects in *Adonais* with the theme of Moschus's *Lament for Bion*, which articulates the classical formula of a shepherd-poet grieving for the loss of a fellow shepherd and superior poet. Shelley's adaptation of these sources in *Adonais* is given a strong literary inflection. Urania, who takes the place of Venus in the source myth, is in Shelley's conception the presiding goddess of the English poetic tradition, her name replacing at one point in the draft what was originally the phrase 'great Poesy'.⁶ Shelley's Urania is the widow of Milton and bereaved mother of Adonais/Keats, and it is she who is the principal mourner in the poem, followed by other sorrowing English poets, living and dead, and also by Keats's own poems, written or unwritten. In the first half of the poem Urania's identity as the mother of English poets is central to the coherence of the 'action', and is particularly significant in the poem's powerfully reflexive effect. Keats's permanent presence within that tradition is partly dependent on the success of Shelley's own poem in establishing his subject's claims to be so regarded, and that success in turn offers a guarantee of Shelley's own status. Urania is Milton's muse in *Paradise Lost* (vii. 1-39), and Shelley's own dedication to her as muse is articulated in a letter to Thomas Love Peacock in February 1820, before he had heard of Keats's death, describing himself as composing the *Defence of Poetry* 'in honour of my mistress Urania'.⁷

Urania in *Adonais* has sometimes been understood to embrace a wider philosophical connotation which carries her significance

well beyond the broadly literary. A number of studies have sought to demonstrate a pervasive and central Platonism in the poem's intellectual framework, structure and style, which can be construed as in accord with her Platonic associations.⁸ Peacock speaks in a note to his poem *Rhododaphne*, which Shelley will have known well, of the significance of Urania in Neoplatonic commentary:

The Egyptians, as Plutarch informs us in his Erotic dialogue, recognised three distinct powers of Love: the Uranian, or Heavenly; the Pandemian, Vulgar or Earthly; and the Sun . . . Uranian Love, in the mythological philosophy of Plato, is the deity or genius of pure mental passion for the good and the beautiful; and Pandemian Love, of ordinary sexual attachment.⁹

The Platonic identification of Aphrodite Urania with heavenly love, in contrast with the common, earthly and sexual love embodied in Aphrodite Pandemia, originates in Plato's *Symposium*, which Shelley translated at Bagni di Lucca in the summer of 1818:

For assuredly there are two Venuses; one, the eldest, the daughter of Uranus, born without a mother, whom we call the Uranian; the other younger, the daughter of Jupiter and Dione, whom we call the Pandemian . . . The Love . . . which attends upon Venus Pandemos is, in truth, common to the vulgar, and presides over transient and fortuitous connexions, and is worshipped by the least excellent of mankind. The votaries of this deity seek the body rather than the soul, and the ignorant rather than the wise, disdaining all that is honourable and lovely, and considering how they shall best satisfy their sensual necessities. This Love is derived from the younger goddess, who partakes in her nature both of male and female. But the attendant on the other, the Uranian, whose nature is entirely masculine, is the Love who inspires us with affection, and exempts us from all wantonness and libertinism. Those who are inspired by this divinity seek the affections

of those endowed by nature with greater excellence and vigour both of body and mind. And it is easy to distinguish those who especially exist under the influence of this power, by their choosing in Early youth as the objects of their love those in whom the intellectual faculties have begun to develop.¹⁰

Shelley's Urania in *Adonais* might seem to pose an unwanted contrast with the lower Cyprian Aphrodite of the source myth in Bion's handling, where the goddess is distinctly earthy and sexual, and so not ideally fitted to Shelley's adaptation to Keats's situation; hence the change in Urania's identity in *Adonais* from lover to mother. The *Symposium* itself goes on to explore the identity of the Uranian love with both music and poetry:

Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system. In the very system of harmony and rhythm, it is easy to distinguish love. The double love is not distinguishable in music itself; but it is required to apply it to the service of mankind by system and harmony, which is called poetry, or the composition of melody; or by the correct use of songs and measures already composed, which is called discipline; then one can be distinguished from the other, by the aid of an extremely skilful artist. And the better love ought to be honoured and preserved for the sake of those who are virtuous, and that the nature of the vicious may be changed through the inspiration of its spirit. This is that beautiful Uranian love, the attendant on the Uranian muse . . .¹¹

In this light the figure of Urania can serve to embody a specific conception of English poetic tradition, particularly where Milton plays a central role; but because of her Platonic associations Urania can also, in the latter part of *Adonais*, personify a wider conception of the enduring character of human creativity, which in its memorials and productions offers a mode of immortality through its continual successive reincarnations in

the mental life of human generations. Her position as the muse of astronomy provides a further motivation, especially given the complex pattern of star imagery which is initiated in the poem's Platonic motto, and which culminates in the closing lines of the final stanza. Shelley's Urania also resembles Asia in *Prometheus Unbound*, another female embodiment of the ideal whose ultimate mode of existence is as pure love, an absolute too bright ever to be approached directly, but – as throughout Shelley's writings – to be inferred through the effects of her presence. Shelley's language in the second half of *Adonais* is evidently coloured by Platonic and Neoplatonic imagery, although not in terms which suggest any systematic exposition of or formal commitment to Platonism or Neoplatonism, however understood. Plato is consistently honoured as a great poet in the inclusive sense of *Defence of Poetry*, but not as a thinker whose specific doctrines are to be adhered to as a guiding body of thought. Shelley's fragmentary Preface to his translation of the *Symposium* puts it succinctly:

[Plato's] views into the nature of mind and existence are often obscure, only because they are profound; and though his theories respecting the government of the world, and the elementary laws of moral action, are not always correct, yet there is scarcely any of his treatises which do not, however stained by puerile sophisms, contain the most remarkable intuitions into all that can be the subject of the human mind.¹²

As Michael Scrivener cogently notes, in the final stanzas of *Adonais* 'the Neoplatonic One to which the postmortal spirit returns is a metaphor, a symbol, and must be understood as a poetically useful fiction'.¹³ The unmistakable presence of Platonic metaphors and patterns of thought in *Adonais* is better understood as an element in the poem's rhetorical classicism.

Keats is represented in *Adonais* as the heir of Milton because of the powerful impression made on Shelley by the heavily Miltonic *Hyperion*, which Shelley first read in October 1820.¹⁴ *Lycidas* is consequently (and unsurprisingly) a palpable presence in the poem's allusive texture, together with a range

of evocations embracing *Paradise Lost* and other poems.¹⁵ However, Keats's favourite poet in the period when Shelley knew him personally was not Milton, but Spenser, and as various commentators have noted,¹⁶ *Adonais* is coloured by a graceful patterning of allusions which acknowledge Spenser's influence on Keats. *Adonais* is in Spenserian stanzas, and offers a profusion of echoes which are unusual in being derived from less familiar shorter works, including Spenser's own elegy for Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophel*, with its associated 'Doleful Lay of Clorinda', the *Foure Hymnes*, *Daphnidaea*, and the *Epithalamion*.¹⁷ Spenser's relationship with Sir Philip Sidney is a notable feature of his presence in *Adonais*. Shelley had been reading Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* in February 1820 in connection with his own *Defence of Poetry*,¹⁸ and Spenser's carefully poised elegy *Astrophel* thus offered an apposite model for Shelley's own version of the Greek pastoral lament by one poet for another, and explains Sidney's own presence in Shelley's poem in stanza xlv. This connects with the origin of *Lycidas* in the death of Milton's friend Edward King and sets the literary context for Shelley's self-positioning relative to Keats and to English poetry in stanzas xxx-xxxiv of *Adonais*.

The dominating literary presence that pervades the rhetoric of *Adonais*, however, is not Milton, or Spenser, but Keats himself. Despite the number of commentators who have discussed this aspect of the poem, including various exercises in scholarly source-hunting and the identification of references, the extent of Shelley's indebtedness to Keats in *Adonais* has not been fully appreciated or understood.¹⁹ Shelley's elegy comprises a critique of Keats's poetic career and its context in the party-dominated culture of the Reviews. It repeatedly refers to Keats's published poetry, particularly *Endymion* and *Hyperion* but also all of the major odes. These allusions range from almost direct quotation, through complimentary references by word, phrasing or pun, to the implicit celebrations of major passages in Keats, which inform some of the best-known stanzas of *Adonais*. Shelley's central purpose is to establish Keats as a fixed star in the constellation of the great poets, and its brilliantly original approach is to weave the products of Keats's poetic imagination into the texture of his elegy. In

Adonais the presence of Keats in the English poetic tradition is consequently neither a matter of mere assertion nor simply a demonstration of his claims to be the inheritor – or indeed more literally the literary offspring – of Spenser and Milton. Keats's comparable stature is everywhere implicit in the poem's echoing of his living poetic voice, alongside those of his peers. The poem's opening announces its intentions; after a solemnly slow-moving and emphatically Grecian adoption of the pastoral idiom, Shelley invites the moment of Keats's death to communicate to the rest of time the injunction that Keats must not be forgotten:

I weep for Adonais – he is dead!
 O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
 Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
 And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
 To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
 And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
 Died Adonais; till the Future dares
 Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
 An echo and a light unto eternity!

The mode of this echoing may be illustrated by some examples of Keats's presence as a poet in the texture of the rhetoric of *Adonais*.

Some Keatsian references in *Adonais* are long attested and easily recognised, as in the obvious allusion to *Isabella: Or, the Pot of Basil* in stanza vi:

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished,
 The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
 Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
 And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;
 Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
 Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
 The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
 Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
 The broken lily lies – the storm is overpast.

This allusive tribute is not merely gestural, but puts the *Quarterly's* reviewers in the position of Isabella's brothers, who murdered her lover for gain; Urania weeps over her poetical offspring, destroyed by a government hireling, just as Isabella

Hung over her sweet basil evermore,
And moistened it with tears unto the core.

(ll. 422-3)²⁰

The maiden was 'sad' because it was from Lorenzo's mouldering head that her (white-flowered) basil had grown and spread 'in perfumèd leafits' (l. 432); Urania, too, is sad because what 'exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath' is a 'leprous corpse' (*Adonais* ll. 172-3).

It has also often been noted that the first line of stanza xvii is a complimentary allusion to Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale':

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

The 'Ode to a Nightingale' seems to have been exempt from Shelley's initially rather lukewarm estimate of the poems other than *Hyperion* in the *Lamia* volume of 1820, because the *Defence of Poetry*, written in February 1820, appears at one famous moment to have Keats's poem in mind:

A Poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness, and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. (para. 12)²¹

The apparent allusion in *Adonais* to the 'lorn nightingale' is reinforced by the epithet 'lorn' ('forlorn! The very word is like a bell'), and the reference is sustained also in the following line, where the 'melodious pain' with which the nightingale 'mourns . . . her mate' concentrates at once the diction and the emotional *mise en scène* of the ode's first stanza:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thy happiness –
 That thou, light-wingèd dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

The self-conscious indebtedness of Shelley's stanza implies the presence of Keats in the literary culture on which *Adonais* constantly draws. Keats's stature is also implicit in his proximity and fellowship with other voices. The first line of Coleridge's 'To the Nightingale', 'Sister of love-lorn Poets, Philomel!', may also be invoked. Less emphatically, but in a manner characteristic of the diction of *Adonais*, Milton and *Lycidas* are hinted at in the resonance of the Keatsian word 'melodious' (it also occurs twice in *Hyperion* iii, ll. 49 and 81):

Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
 He must not float upon his watery bier
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.

(ll. 10-14)

Adonais often uses single words or short phrases to no more than suggest an echo of a source in Keats's literary forebears; as in lines 262-3, where Shelley's 'the mountain shepherds came, / Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent' recalls at

once the 'ivy never sere' and 'mantle hairy' of *Lycidas* lines 2 and 104. Spenser is also constantly echoed in this way, as in 'The amorous birds now pair in every brake, / And build their mossy homes in field and brere' (*Adonais* ll. 159-60); 'brere' is an unusual form for 'briar' except in Spenser, where it is the normal spelling in *The Shepheardes Calender*. Shelley's two lines also rehearse a semi-formulaic Spenserian habit, as in 'Who through thicke woods and brakes and briers him drew, / To weary him the more', and 'Through hils and dales, through bushes and through breres / Long thus she fled' (*Faerie Queene* VI. v. 17. 3-4, VI. viii. 32. 1-2). This effect is repeated in the phrase 'love's delight' (*Adonais* l. 170), which is a very common phrase throughout Spenser, occurring many times in *The Faerie Queene* but also in *Daphnida* (513), *Astrophel* (54), the *Hymne . . . of Love* (269) and the *Hymne . . . of Beavtie* (233).

The setting of the Keatsian allusion in *Adonais* stanza xvii is more complex because the shaping and mood of the stanza is also gracefully classical. The immediate 'source' is Moschus:

Not so much did the dolphin mourn beside the sea-banks,
nor ever sang so sweet the nightingale on the cliffs, nor so
much lamented the swallow on the long ranges of the
hills, nor shrilled so loud the halcyon o'er his sorrows . . .
Nor so much, by the grey sea-waves, did ever the sea-bird
sing, nor so much in the dells of dawn did the bird of
Memnon bewail the son of the Mourning, fluttering
around his tomb, as they lamented for Bion dead . . . Night-
ingales, and all the swallows that once he was wont to
delight, that he would teach to speak, they sat over against
each other on the boughs and kept moaning, and the
birds sang in answer, 'Wail, ye wretched ones, even ye'.²²

Shelley's use of the Greek pastoral tradition in *Adonais* combines ingenious coincidence and semi-punning (as in the fortuitous presence of the nightingale in both Moschus and Keats) with an apparently effortless readiness in adapting the moods and situations of the Greek poems to the exigencies of his particular concern with Keats's mortal fate and the prospect of his

immortal fame. Virgil is also present in the background, deployed with a similar unostentatious ingenuity, and enriching the cultural setting in which England ('Albion') is dramatised as mourning for its dead hero-poet:

As a nightingale he sang that sorrowing under a poplar's
 Shade laments the young she has lost, whom a heartless
 ploughman
 Has noticed and dragged from the nest unfledged; and the
 nightingale
 Weeps all night, on a branch repeating a piteous song,
 Loading the acres around with the burden of her lament.²³

Stanza xvii offers a different classical idiom in extending the Keatsian reference from the nightingale to the eagle. Keats often refers to eagles in his poetry (cf. *Hyperion* i. 156-7, 182, and ii. 226, and the line from the sonnet 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 'Like a sick eagle looking at the sky'), which Shelley acknowledges in his introduction of 'the eagle, who like thee could scale / Heaven'. There is a sophisticated classical pun here which bows to *Hyperion*, which literally understood in its Greek derivation, ὑπερ ἰών, means 'going aloft' and hence the 'scaling Heaven' of Shelley's lines. As William Michael Rossetti first recognised, these classical sources also include, in the image of the eagle 'soaring and screaming round her empty nest', a reminiscence of Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 49-56, a passage itself recalling *Odyssey* xvi. 216.²⁴

Rossetti also first noted that Shelley's complicated image in lines 147-51, of the bereft Albion mourning more intensely for Keats than the eagle for its young, is suggested by a passage in Milton's *Areopagitica*, which thus enlarges the appropriate literary context still further:

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation
 rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking
 her invincible locks: Methinks I see her as an Eagle,
 [renewing] her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled
 eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unscaling her
 long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly

radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means . . .²⁵

One abiding paradox in Shelley's representation of the reactions to Keats's death, with its vision of a Miltonic grandeur in the mourning of the nation, is its entirely imaginary nature. Keats was not a figure of national reputation when he died; on the contrary, there appeared at the time every indication that, like a Kirke White, he was destined for obscurity, surviving only as a memory in the minds of his immediate circle (as *Adonais* itself laments, in stanza xxi). The poem's assertion that 'Albion wails for thee', and its wish that Keats's murderous reviewer – 'his head who pierced thy innocent breast' – should be cursed like Cain, are endorsed only by their articulation in Shelley's elegy. The audibility of Keats's echoing voice is consequently linked decisively with the power of Shelley's own verse to survive and be heard. Since Keats's poetic fate is inextricably bound up with Shelley's own, the presence in *Adonais* of Keats's voice will only secure its place in the tradition of English poetry if Shelley's elegy itself survives.

Shelley's determination is to use his own poem as the agent of a self-fulfilling prophecy that Keats's fame will become 'an echo and a light unto eternity'. It is fitting that the classical nymph Echo herself figures in *Adonais* (in stanza xv) and that she is conceived as abandoning her conventional practice of echoing such sounds as she hears, because she has become preoccupied in her grief with echoing only the 'remembered lay' of Keats:

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
 And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
 And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
 Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
 Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day,
 Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
 Than those for whose disdain she pined away
 Into a shadow of all sounds: – a drear
 Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Amongst the sounds that Echo is here, for the time being at least, not repeating, are those evoked by Shelley's line 'Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day', an unmistakable allusion to Gray's *Elegy* (a favourite of Shelley's from childhood), which in the immediate aftermath of Keats's death must also give precedence.²⁶ The nymph is not the only personified echo in *Adonais*. In the opening stanzas Urania is imagined in her first reaction to the news of Keats's death, 'Mid listening Echoes', one of which

with soft enamoured breath,
 Rekindled all the fading melodies,
 With which, like flowers that mock the corpse beneath,
 He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

Urania as the goddess of English poetry looks for comfort in her bereavement to echoes, who are reciting the 'fading melodies' of Keats's poems. This moment is returned to later when, as Urania is about to go on her journey to Keats's tomb, she is roused by 'all the Echoes whom their Sister's song / Had held in holy silence' (ll. 195-6; i.e. the Echo who 'rekindled all the fading melodies' of Keats's poems).

Shelley perhaps considered Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' to be the poem which came closest in stature to *Hyperion*, because he links the two poems again in stanza xlii of *Adonais*:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;

Here the obvious reference of 'night's sweet bird' is paired with 'the moan / Of thunder' which is a recurring motif in *Hyperion*, as for example in 'As if the vanward clouds of evil days / Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear / Was with its storèd thunder labouring up' (i. 39-41; compare also *Hyperion* i. 325, ii. 121, and iii. 103). Shelley, however, clearly regarded *Hyperion* much more highly than most of the other poems in Keats's 1820 volume, and also much more highly than *Endymion* (which he seems to have found barely readable).²⁷

Indeed, it seems likely that right up to the period in April 1821 just after he had first learned that Keats had died, he was not particularly familiar with most of his published output. When Shelley wrote to Byron on 17 April 1821 (*Letters* ii. 283-4) conveying the news, Byron replied on 26 April in typically robust style:

I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats – is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! Though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of 'Endymion' in the *Quarterly*. It was severe, – but not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.

I recollect the effect on me of the Edinburgh on my first poem; it was rage, and resistance, and redress – but not despondency nor despair . . . Had I known that Keats was dead – or that he was alive and so sensitive – I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry [in Byron's *Letter to John Murray* (1821) on the Bowles/Pope controversy], to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*, and my disapprobation of *his own* style of writing.²⁸

Shelley's reply of 4 May picks up Byron's reactions and develops them, identifying Hunt as the source of the story that Keats's final illness had been brought on by the *Quarterly's* review. There is a deepening anger with the contemptuously destructive tone and terms of the attacks on a young and immature talent: 'Some plants, which require delicacy in rearing, might bring forth beautiful flowers if ever they should arrive at maturity'. This position is explicitly contrasted with Byron's own powerful ability to withstand such criticism, and his 'strength to soar beyond the arrows' (Byron's ability to withstand criticism and to return it in kind, and the association of Keats with a blighted early-blooming flower, are both

elements that reappear transformed in *Adonais*, for example in stanzas vi and xxviii). Shelley himself is now ‘morbidly indifferent to this sort of praise or blame; and this, perhaps, deprives me of an incitement to do what now I shall never do, i.e., write anything worth calling a poem’. Shelley also notes Byron’s regret that he had included Keats as a target in his pamphlet war with Bowles over the merits of Pope. As he explains,

I did not know that Keats had attacked Pope; I had heard that Bowles had done so, and that you had most severely chastised him therefor. Pope, it seems, has been selected as the pivot of a dispute in taste, on which, until I understand it, I must profess myself neuter. I certainly do not think Pope, or *any* writer, a fit model for any succeeding writer; if he, or they should be determined to be so, it would all come to a question as to under what forms mediocrity should perpetually reproduce itself; for true genius vindicates to itself an exemption from all regard to whatever has gone before – and in this question I feel no interest.²⁹

These remarks show that Byron had set Shelley thinking about the use of writers as models, but this passage also makes it plain that at the time of this letter Shelley was not familiar with Keats’s ‘Sleep and Poetry’, the final poem in *Poems* (1817), which although it does not name him clearly has Pope and his followers in mind in castigating the ‘schism / Nurtured by foppery and barbarism’ caused by the dominance of the heroic couplet in the early part of the eighteenth century:

Men were thought wise who could not understand
His [Apollo’s] glories: with a puling infant’s force
They swayed about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus . . .

beauty was awake!

Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of – were closely wed

To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile . . .

(‘Sleep and Poetry’, ll. 181-96)

The profusion and detail of Shelley’s Keatsian allusions in *Adonais* indicate that he must have undertaken a meditated programme of intensive reading in Keats in the week or so following the 4 May letter, as detailed work on the composition of *Adonais* will have begun by the middle of May. It is also evident that Byron’s letter of 26 April also stimulated a period of programmatic reading in Pope (and indeed in Byron).³⁰ Pope does not feature prominently in the records of Shelley’s reading, but Mary Shelley’s journal shows that over a few days in the latter part of May 1821 Shelley read aloud the whole of *The Rape of the Lock*, and that on 26 May he also read aloud the *Essay on Criticism*.³¹ The latter poem appears to lie behind a passage in *Adonais* which engages obliquely with Keats’s fate at the hands of the Tory critics, who had seized on Keats’s ‘Cockney’ stylistic mannerisms as evidence of his upstart pretensions, his failure to appreciate sound models, and his political affiliation with the school of Leigh Hunt. Stanza xii is part of a sequence in which the Echoes are joined by ‘Dreams’ and ‘Splendours’ – all variously representing written or unwritten poems – as mourners within the ‘twilight chamber’ of Keats’s tomb:

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music:

The sense here of an original and distinctive quality in Keats’s poetry, able to make its effect by breaking through the defences of a ‘guarded wit’, recalls Pope’s *Essay*:

Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track.
Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;

From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
 Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
 The heart, and all its end at once attains.

(*Essay on Criticism* i. 150-7)

The allusion deftly turns Pope's famous lines to Keats's advantage, and implicitly rebukes the anonymous critic who had attacked Keats for his idiosyncratic and 'unclassical' style. This effect, in *Adonais*, of detailed commentary not just on Keats's work as a poet, but on the effects on creativity of the schismatic literary politics of the day, is highly characteristic.

Shelley even appears to confirm the possibility that he had prepared for *Adonais* by a deliberate programme of reading. At the end of a letter of 13 July 1821 to his friends John and Maria Gisborne he writes:

I will only remind you of Faust – my impatience for the conclusion of which is only exceeded by my desire to welcome you. – Do you observe any traces of him in the Poem [*Adonais*] I send you. – Poets, the best of them – are a very camæleonic race: they take the colour not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves under which they pass. – ³²

This implies a distinction between two kinds of literary allusion in play in *Adonais*. One is the constant possibility of glancing allusion to some presence in the general literary culture, or in the present incidental reading of Shelley and his circle. The example of this that Shelley himself gives in his letter is a reminiscence of Goethe's *Faust* in stanza xliii,³³ but other instances might include the various reminiscences of Shakespeare (for example *Macbeth* at ll. 184-5, *Romeo and Juliet* at l. 219, *Henry V* at l. 237), and the several more or less explicit recollections of biblical passages such as the obvious allusion in line 151 to Genesis 4: 11-14. There are also a number of words, phrases and images which clearly derive from Dante, a subject of constant discussion and study in Shelley's Pisan circle. But although the imagery in particular more frequently suggests

Dante in the poem's closing stanzas – and while it must be granted that the heightened manner of the last third of *Adonais* is partly effected through a deliberate approximation to the intense visionary manner of both Dante and Plato – it is difficult to establish a definite thematic or rhetorical patterning which can be taken as a dominant effect. The other kind of literary presence implied in Shelley's letter, providing the chameleon poet with 'the colour of what they feed on', is exemplified in those patterns of systematic allusion in *Adonais* which are integral with the entirety of the poem's imaginative conception and detailed realisation: Bion and Moschus; Spenser and Milton; and, pre-eminently, Keats himself, as in stanza xliii:

He is a portion of the loveliness
 Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
 His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
 Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
 All new successions to the forms they wear;
 Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
 To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
 And bursting in its beauty and its might
 From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

This much-discussed stanza clearly borrows the language of Platonic and Neoplatonic discourse, and can be linked with passages in the *Timaeus* 68, and the *Ennead* I.6.2 of Plotinus. Shelley's verse, however, does not form part of any sustained overarching discourse of a kind which may be inferred from his writings as a whole. He does not write as a philosopher. This stanza seems to owe at least as much to Coleridge's 'Eolian Harp', which similarly adapts the heavily metaphorical style of Neoplatonic thought to the purposes of an English poem. But one principal effect of stanza xliii is to honour the speech of Oceanus in Keats's *Hyperion*, with its courageously clear-sighted and stoically impersonal acceptance of change as progress:

As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
 Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;

And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
 In form and shape compact and beautiful,
 In will, in action free, companionship,
 And thousand other signs of purer life;
 So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
 A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 And fated to excel us, as we pass
 In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
 Thereby more conquered, than by us the rule
 Of shapeless chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
 Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
 And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
 Can it deny the chieftom of green groves?
 Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
 Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
 To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
 We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
 Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
 But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower
 Above us in their beauty, and must reign
 In right thereof. For 'tis the eternal law
 That first in beauty should be first in might.

(*Hyperion* ii. 206-229)

The allusion is perfectly placed as the language of *Adonais* gathers energy towards its climax. For Shelley Keats's transformation from fated mortal man to immortally famous poet is itself an instance of a higher beauty supplanting a lower, and of a triumphant negotiation of the difficult intransigencies of material transformation, 'torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight'. The passage is also remarkable in assuming as a given the greatness of Keats's poem, and in invoking its presence at a level of detail which would not be matched in any critical commentary for decades. One further such example is offered in the most famous lines of Shelley's elegy:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,

Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.

These lines are in a Platonic idiom, although they do not articulate any specific Platonic doctrine, and have never been convincingly traced to any particular classical source. Their sense approximates more closely to Shelley's own words in the *Defence of Poetry*, explaining his conception of the prophetic character of the poet: 'A Poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not' (para. 4). In terms of literary reference, however, what Shelley has in mind is Porphyro's climactic vision of Madeline as she prepares to disrobe in *The Eve of St Agnes*:

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and
 kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together pressed,
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
 She seemed a splendid angel, newly dressed,
 Save wings, for Heaven – Porphyro grew faint;
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

(ll. 208-25)

Shelley's lines commemorate this beautifully realised vision, where the glass 'innumerable of stains' breaks the white moonlight into colours; and in so commemorating the living poetry of his dead contemporary the lines themselves enact their own

assertion, that Keats as a poet has become one with a constellation of permanent presences existing beyond the exigencies and vicissitudes of 'Earth's shadows'.

This significance of Keats's poetry in the design and verbal texture of *Adonais* is reflected in Shelley's title. The simultaneous identification with and difference from a classical model, so characteristic of Shelley's use of classical sources throughout his work, finds its defining instance in the name Adonais. Various suggestions have been offered as to what is implied in Shelley's invented name, the most influential probably being Earl Wasserman's idea that it is a telescoping of the Greek 'Adonis' with Hebrew 'Adonai', thus underpinning a grand syncretic design in the poem's philosophical argument as Wasserman understands it.³⁴ This derivation of Adonais is awkward, partly because of syllabic incompatibility, and because of the strain of imagining Keats as Jehovah. *Adonais* as a title, and as a classical name for Keats, is probably best understood as an aspect of Shelley's determination to sustain a sophisticated and learned classicism in honour of Keats's right to absolute canonical status. The name thus offers a Platonic pun on the Greek word for 'nightingale', ἀηδών ('aedon'), in the manner of Socrates' etymologies in Plato's *Cratylus*. Compare for example Socrates' discussion of the derivation of the name of the goddess Hera (Ἥρα):

Hera is the lovely one (ἐρατή, 'erate'), for Zeus, according to tradition, loved and married her; possibly also the name may have been given when the legislator was thinking of the heavens, and may be only a disguise of the air (ἀήρ, 'aer'), putting the end in the place of the beginning.³⁵

Shelley's title uses this seriously playful type of etymology, 'putting the end in the place of the beginning', in an elegant merging of the classical name in the source myth, with the singing bird most associated both with poetry and with, and by, Keats himself. In the poem Keats as a nightingale is gently iterated at lines 145-6:

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain

And the poem's opening stanzas, with their machinery of 'listening Echoes' which are to echo Keats throughout the poem, invoke

all the fading melodies
 With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
 He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.
 (ll. 16-18)

These fading melodies themselves echo the closing lines of the 'Ode to a Nightingale':

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the hill stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades:
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music – do I wake or sleep?
 (ll. 75-80)

Shelley considered *Adonais* his best poem. As he remarked to his friends the Gisbornes, 'It is a highly wrought *piece of art*, perhaps better in point of composition than any thing I have written'.³⁶ The immense care and thought with which Shelley's elegy is elaborated constitutes the grandest of the many compliments paid to Keats as a poet. It is difficult not to think that Keats's celebrated advice to Shelley in his last letter to him was remembered and taken as a guiding principle in the composition of *Adonais*: 'You I am sure will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore'.³⁷

University of Liverpool

NOTES

¹ Shelley's judgement of *Hyperion* in the first paragraph of the Preface to *Adonais* is typical of all his recorded views of that poem: 'I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years';

references to *Adonais* are to the text in *Shelley: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd edn. (New York, 2001). In a letter to Marianne Hunt of 29 October 1820 Shelley reiterated his wish to help Keats in his illness by looking after him in Italy, and wrote: 'I am aware indeed in part [tha]t I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass [me] and this is an additional motive & will be an added pleasure': *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. F. L. Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964), ii. 240.

² For an opposite reading of the spirit and purpose of *Adonais*, see Andrew Epstein, "'Flowers that Mock the Corse Beneath": Shelley's *Adonais*, Keats, and Poetic Influence', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 48 (1999), 90-128; this article has obvious affinities with the arguments in James A. W. Heffernan, 'Adonais: Shelley's Consumption of Keats', *Studies in Romanticism*, 23 (1984), 295-315, that Shelley himself 'invented' the story that Keats died partly as a result of his reaction to reviews of his work, and that this 'insult' was offered in order to project Shelley's self-image of vulnerability on to Keats, in the service of Shelley's own psychological and poetic purposes.

³ *Quarterly Review*, 19 (Apr. 1818), 204-7; *British Critic*, NS 9 (June 1818), 649-54; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (Aug. 1818), 519-24.

⁴ Shelley's fragmentary poem on the death of his son is clearly one starting-point in his conception of *Adonais*: see *Complete Poetical Works of Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford, 1904), p. 581. The good discussion of *Adonais* as elegy in Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985), is limited by its assumption that Shelley's grief for Keats was intense and personal.

⁵ As Shelley notes of *Adonais* in a letter to John Gisborne, 'the style is calm & solemn': *Letters*, ii. 300.

⁶ The phrase 'Great Poesy', later replaced by 'Urania', occurs twice in the draft in Bodleian MS Shelley adds. e.9 p. 25; see *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*, xiv: *Shelley's 'Devils' Notebook*, ed. P. M. S. Dawson and Timothy Webb (1993), p. 31.

⁷ *Letters*, ii. 261.

⁸ The Platonic reading was first elaborated at length in Carlos Baker, *Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision* (Princeton, 1948), James A. Notopoulos, *The Platonism of Shelley: A Study of the Poetic Mind* (Durham, NC, 1949), and Neville Rogers, *Shelley at Work: A Critical Enquiry* (Oxford, 1956), and developed by Milton Wilson, *Shelley's Later Poetry: A Study of his Prophetic Imagination* (New York, 1959), and Ross Woodman, *The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley* (Toronto, 1964). Platonic readings have not been dominant in recent years, as Shelley's critics have generally found his scepticism more restless and rhetorical; but studies of *Adonais* are still sometimes shadowed by the assumption of a commitment to some mode or other of transcendence and idealism in Shelley's thought, for example in the thoughtful study by Jean Hall, *The Transforming Image: A Study of Shelley's Major Poetry* (Urbana, 1980). The detailed studies by Earl R. Wasserman, *Shelley: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore, Md., 1971), pp. 462-502, and Kenneth Neill Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 422-44, still represent the best articulations of two opposed camps in Shelley criticism, as it has focused on *Adonais*, Wasserman treating Shelley as a philosophical poet whose sceptical idealism informs the structure and rhetoric of all the major poems, while Cameron argues in explicit contrast for the abiding materialist radicalism and developmental cast of Shelley's thought and work.

⁹ *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones, 10 vols. (1924-34), vii. 91; Peacock's reference is to Plutarch's 'Dialogue on Love', *Moralia*, 764.

¹⁰ *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols., Julian edition (1926-30), viii. 174-5.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 181.

¹² *Ibid.* 161-2.

¹³ Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton, 1982), p. 273.

¹⁴ 'Among the modern things which have reached me is a volume of poems by Keats; in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called

"Hyperion". I dare say you have not time to read it; but it is certainly an astonishing piece of writing, and gives me a conception of Keats which I confess I had not before'. Shelley to Peacock, 8 Nov. 1820 (*Letters*, ii. 244).

¹⁵ *Lycidas* is a pervasive presence in *Adonais*: for specific verbal echoes see e.g. ll. 244-8, 289-90, 334-6; other Miltonic echoes are discussed below, and cf. also the references to 'Il Penseroso' and 'L'Allegro' (*Adonais* ll. 28, 121).

¹⁶ See e.g. Baker, *Shelley's Major Poetry*, and Edwin B. Silverman, *Poetic Synthesis in 'Adonais'* (The Hague, 1972).

¹⁷ Shelley perhaps made a conscious decision not to make *The Faerie Queene* itself a prominent presence because of Keats's common enthusiasm with Leigh Hunt for that poem; Shelley agreed with Byron and Peacock in disapproving of Hunt's stylistic influence on Keats. This may also explain why Hunt as mourner in *Adonais* (stanza xxxv) remains silent, unlike Byron and Moore (stanza xxx), and is present as friend and supporter rather than poetic voice.

¹⁸ *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1987), i. 354.

¹⁹ The best account is Stuart Curran's fine essay, 'Adonais in Context', in Kelvin Everest (ed.), *Shelley Revalued: Essays from the Gregynog Conference* (Leicester, 1983); see also *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*, vii: *Shelley's Last Notebook*, ed. Donald H. Reiman (1990), pp. 97-104, and *Shelley and his Circle 1773-1822*, vols. i-iv, ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron, vols. v-viii ed. Donald H. Reiman (Cambridge, Mass., 1961-86), v. 399-427. There is an astute discussion of Keats's presence in *Adonais* in Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt, and their Circle* (Cambridge, 1998).

²⁰ References to Keats's poems are to *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard (Harmondsworth, 1973).

²¹ References to *Defence of Poetry* are to the text in *Shelley: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Reiman and Fraistat.

²² Moschus, *Lament for Bion* 37-45, trans. A. Lang, *Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus* (1924).

²³ Virgil, *Georgics* iv. 511-15, trans. C. Day Lewis, *The Eclogues, Georgics and Aeneid of Virgil* (1966).

²⁴ Shelley, *Adonais*, ed. William Michael Rossetti, assisted by A. O. Prickard (Oxford, 1903); this remains the most helpful and interesting fully annotated text of *Adonais*. *Shelley's Adonais: A Critical Edition*, ed. Anthony D. Knerr (New York, 1984), while offering a useful survey of criticism, is unambitiously derivative and unreliable in fact and accuracy.

²⁵ *Works of Milton* (New York, 1931), iv. 344 ll. 19-27.

²⁶ Shelley for a time considered an extended parade of mourners for Keats, as the drafts in Bodleian MS Shelley adds. e.9 include attempts at several stanzas apparently representing poets, one amongst whom seems to be Thomas Gray (adds. e.9 p. 16):

And then, as overcome by hidden love
He sat among the tombs which do conceal
The ghosts whom glory knows but speaks not of –

The phrase 'the tombs' has as an alternative in the draft 'some lowly grave'; see *Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*, xiv. 23 (which reads 'sudden' for 'hidden').

²⁷ Shelley wrote to Ollier of *Endymion* on 6 September 1819: 'the Authors intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it' (*Letters*, ii. 117).

²⁸ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Marchand, 12 vols. (1973-82), viii. 103-4.

²⁹ *Letters*, ii. 290.

³⁰ Charles H. Robinson, *Shelley and Byron: The Snake and Eagle Wreathed in Fight* (Baltimore, Md., 1976), demonstrates that *Adonais* includes elements that must derive from a recent and intensively detailed reading of Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*; see also Peter J. Manning, 'Byron's *English Bards* and Shelley's *Adonais*: A Note', *Notes & Queries*, NS 215 (1970), 380-1.

³¹ *Journals of Mary Shelley*, i. 368.

³² *Letters*, ii. 308.

³³ The passage in question is from Goethe's *Faust* I, scene 2, The Study, Mephistopheles to Faust, which is recalled in *Adonais* stanza xliii:

I'm a part of the Part that first was all,
part of the Darkness that gave birth to Light –
proud Light, that now contests the senior rank
of Mother Night, disputes her rights to space;
yet it does not succeed, however much it strives,
because it can't escape material fetters.
Light emanates from matter, lends it beauty,
But matter checks the course of Light,
And so I hope it won't be long
Before they both have been annihilated.

Faust I and II, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins, in the *Collected Works of Goethe*, vol. ii (Princeton, 1984).

³⁴ *Shelley: A Critical Reading*, 464-5.

³⁵ Plato, *Cratylus* 404c (trans. Jowett).

³⁶ *Letters*, ii. 294.

³⁷ *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), ii. 323.