

KEATS'S PLACES



EDITED BY
RICHARD MARGGRAF TURLEY



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The conference in 2016 was further enlivened by the appearance of Captain Roger Street and his regiment of Dandy Chargers. Their velocipedes, brightly painted with brass fittings, refulgent in the May sun, captivated delegates and visitors to Keats House alike. Keats dismissed these pedal-less, two-wheeled precursors of the bicycle out of hand as the ‘nothing of the day’; too hastily, perhaps—if only he’d tried one for himself. Our thanks to Captain Rog and his dandy squadron. Thanks, also, to Ben Doyle and Camille Davies at Palgrave for their commitment to new research on Keats. I also wish to thank Nicholas Roe and Damian Walford Davies for their generous advice during the preparation of this volume.

A shorter version of Giuseppe Albano's chapter on Keats in Rome first appeared on the Wordsworth Trust blog in January 2015; thanks to the editor Lynn Shepherd for permission to reproduce it here. An earlier imagining of my own chapter on Keats's experience of the Southampton mail coach appeared on the Keats Letters Project website in April 2015. I am grateful to the editors, Mike Theune and Brian Rejack, for permission to recast that work here.

March 2018

Richard Marggraf Turley

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ABBREVIATIONS

- JKNL Nicholas Roe, *John Keats: A New Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2012)
- JSLM *Joseph Severn: Letters and Memoirs*, ed. Grant E. Scott (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- KC *The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers 1816–1878 and More Letters and Poems 1814–1879*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965)
- LJK *The Letters of John Keats 1814–1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958)
- LPBS Frederick L. Jones, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964)
- OED *Oxford English Dictionary*
- PJK *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978)

Unless otherwise indicated, Keats's poems are quoted from *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978). Short citation (as above): *PJK*.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Keats's Coordinates

Richard Marggraf Turley

Several Romantic writers have attained the status of ‘icon of locality’.¹ We think most readily, perhaps, of the ‘geographical poet’ Wordsworth in the Lake District, of Scott at Abbotsford or of Burns in south west Scotland.² Keats himself made the link between this author and locality explicit in the title of his 1818 northern walking tour poem, ‘Lines Written in the Highlands after a Visit to Burns’s Country’. By contrast, most readers do not associate Keats or his poetry with any particular region, with the exception perhaps of Winchester, to whose geophysical prompts Keats responds in ‘To Autumn’. It is often assumed that the pastoral retreats, woods, bowers and hilly landscapes so characteristic of his work are figurative, literary confections, political displacements or ideological blind spots. In the popular imagination, Keats has become deracinated; his apparent timelessness bespeaks placelessness. For many, he now appears as the dreamy Keats of Benedict Cumberbatch’s ‘chocolately’ RP recital of ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ (a million swooning ‘views’ on YouTube), though it is difficult to imagine a version of Keats more at odds with the young man with a territory-specific Moorfields accent who relied on visits to numerous regional towns and tourist spots, as well

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as local sights and sounds, to terraform the imaginative regions of his poetry.³

As a corrective, this book examines Keats's writing in its geophysical and cultural milieu. At the same time, it investigates the imaginative progressions through which actual locations and visionary poetic terrains enter into—and remain in—complex dialogue. In the past decades, a 'spatial turn' in the humanities has applied itself to a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which literary texts are 'placed in a geography', and to the processes through which narratives can be "locked" to a particular geography or landscape'.⁴ Drawing energy from these parallel strands of inquiry, *Keats's Places*—the first full-length geocritical study to examine the coordinates of Keats's imagination—relocates this strongly platial poet in the topo-poetical grounds of his developing career.⁵

1 PLACE AND PRACTICE

Sustained interest in the 'influence of place ... on the writings of Keats' was first registered in Guy Murchie's *The Spirit of Place in Keats* (1955).⁶ Murchie's pioneering study addressed the relation between original topographies and fictional spaces in Keats's work, focusing on the visual, emotional and philosophical cues provided by various locales and the people encountered there. 'Boyish impressions' of medieval chivalric brass work gleaned from the parish church of St Andrew's Enfield, Murchie suggested, may have been remembered in Keats's 1816 valentine 'To [Mary Frogley]' ('Hadst thou liv'd when chivalry/ Lifted up her lance on high', 41). Similarly, architectural features seen in a chapel in Stansted Park appear to have been put to use in *The Eve of St Agnes's* 'sculptur'd dead' and 'purgatorial rails' (14–15).⁷ Murchie's approach adjusted our sense of the importance of actual physical locality to poetic vision, but was not fully calibrated to the complexities that describe the aesthetic, socio-political and psychological correlations between Keats's experience of Regency geospace and the (un)bounded figurative realms of poetry.

The topic of Keats and place was taken up again a few years later in John Freeman's *Literature and Locality: The Literary Topography of Britain and Ireland* (1962). This innovative interdisciplinary project used indexed maps to link geographic areas with writers and their works; in Freeman's own words, it constituted the 'first attempt at a comprehensive and systematic guide to the literary topography of the whole of Britain and Ireland' (Preface). Keats's birthplace was mapped, together with way stations along his walking tour of the north such as Iona, Mull

and Staffa. Freeman's interest in Keats's northern peregrinations was taken up in more detail, and with a focus on sense of place, by Carol Kyros Walker's *Walking North with Keats* (1992). Footstepping Keats's 1818 route, Walker examined the poet's participation in Romantic leisure tourism in terms of the political events of the summer of 1818, notably the Westmorland election. Speaking to a need to *see* Keats's places, Walker's book included evocative photographs of the way marks and terrains described in the tour letters; each image was taken at the appropriate time of year and in matching meteorological conditions. Revealing a fuller range of interaction between physical locality, loco-description and socio-poetic vision, Walker's volume drew attention to Keats's growing resistance to the sublime in the epicentre of that 'high' aesthetic, at the same time as charting his increasing interest in the poverty he found there.

The 1990s saw theorised interest in Keats as an emplaced poet. The 'Keats of the suburbs' emerged at this juncture in persuasive essays by Elizabeth Jones and Alan Bewell. Drawing on the class-centred energies of Marjorie Levinson's seminal *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (1988), Jones and Bewell situated Keats and his poetic 'realm of flora' in Regency suburbia—a 'changing urban environment and cultural consciousness that threatened some of the more cherished values of Britain's established classes'.⁸ At this time, a number of critics also began to inspect the ideological contours of a historical socio-political climate in which Keats's suburbanism could be understood by conservative reviewers explicitly in terms of the liberal values of 'Cockney' literary style. Nicholas Roe's *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (1997) and Jeffery N. Cox's *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (1998) examined the valencies of Keats's class challenges in terms of a geographically defined group of writers centred on Leigh Hunt's cottage in Hampstead. 'Cockney School' dissent, it became apparent, was not only rooted as an organising practice in the cultural and political resonances of suburbia and the sociality of Hunt's Vale of Health, but also—much as Keats's *Blackwood's* reviewing *bête noire* 'Z.' (J. G. Lockhart) claimed—in the physical precincts and prospects of peri-urban Hampstead: in its little hills, heathland flora and window boxes.

Romantic scholarship has continued to address and reformulate the question of how, in Fiona Stafford's words, Keats's poetry is 'conditioned by its original location'.⁹ Devoting a chapter to 'Keats's In-Placeness', Stafford's *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry* (2010)

reads the poet's efforts to turn from romance to epic through his anxious sense of his work's precarious place in the 'immediate world'. For much of his career, Stafford argues, Keats struggled to perceive high art as anything other than 'fundamentally opposed to "real things"'.¹⁰ Stafford is also alert to Keats's frustration with the 'inadequacy of mere description' to represent physical topographies such as the Cumbrian mountains or natural wonders like Fingal's Cave. Her emphasis in *Local Attachments* lies, finally, however, more with the personal placings and displacements of poetry than with the poetry of personal places (such as Hampstead heath, the influence of whose flora on Keats's writing forms the focus of her chapter in the current volume).

Ongoing work on place and text in Romantic Studies has received energising impetus from the emergence of literary geography, a methodologically sophisticated interdisciplinary approach located at the intersection of human geography, regional studies, cartography, cultural studies and literary analysis.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Wordsworth's topographical figures have attracted the lion's share of attention. A tour-de-force example is Damian Walford Davies's hydrographic charting of 'Tintern Abbey' as a poem materially conditioned by the tidal actions of the Bristol Channel and River Wye. For Walford Davies, the poem 'exemplifies the merging of the "space" and "practice" of composition/writing' in the period as much as it represents a 'chart of Wordsworth's contact with shifting river- and estuary-scapes'.¹² Such critical shifts reveal the complexities in play as 'geography conditions the verbal ground' of Wordsworth's verse. *Romantic Localities* (2010), edited by Christoph Bode and Jacqueline Labbe, responds in broad fashion to similar place-centred cues. One of its claims is that the Romantic period witnessed a 'new development in ideas of place and locale', a process of reorientation in which 'place' was becoming 'locale' at the same time as people were becoming 'locals' to distinguish themselves from new kinds of 'visitors'.¹³ These complex acts and phenomenologies of emplacement and displacement, the book's contributors show convincingly, are crucial to the formulation of Romantic writers' 'sense of self and subjectivity' (p. 1). *Romantic Localities'* specific commitment to Keats is elaborated by Stefanie Fricke, whose chapter addresses how a group of male Romantic poets constructed politicised geographies by taking up stories of Robin Hood and the 'greenwood' as a means of configuring a 'homosocial space of male bonding' as an ideal 'realm of liberty' (pp. 117–18).

Responding to, extending or revising this energetic tradition of scholarship, the essays in *Keats's Places* home in on aspects of the poet's relation with locations ranging from The Vale of Health, the British Museum and provincial boarding houses to the 'sites' of poetic volumes themselves. They reveal that Keats's places could be comforting, familiar, grounding locales, but also shifting, uncanny, paradoxical spaces where the geographical comes into tension with the familial, the touristic with the medical, the metropolitan with the archipelagic. Taken as a whole, the volume wrestles with the central question of how Keats's physical landscapes and topographies, towns, villages and cities, tourist spots, retreats and residences inform the mythological and metaphorical ground of his poetry.

2 IN AND ABOUT TOWN

The cover of this book shows John Constable's plein-air painting, 'A View of London, with Sir Richard Steele's House'. Constable's conceit is that he has set up his easel in the middle of busy Haverstock Hill.¹⁴ The small canvas (just 8 inches by 11), its flat palette dominated by neutrals—tans, bones, salmons—and the 'multitude of greens' for which the painter was admired, looks down onto the capital's roofs and smoke wreaths.¹⁵ In the foreground, a short-stage coach trundles south towards the city, having started out at The Bird in Hand public house at the top of Hampstead High Street.¹⁶ Heavily laden, swaying to one side, it will be carrying five or six 'insides' in addition to the three female passengers seen riding up on the box. The buildings grouped on the left, their angular geometrics brought out in dun, ochre and ivory, include The Cart and Horses—a standard stop for coaches going up and down Haverstock Hill.¹⁷ A few daubed figures wait outside for the next carriage. On the right, above the road, stands the former cottage of essayist and playwright Sir Richard Steele (1672–1729), with its steep eaves; the long, curving steps that led up to it are obscured by trees and foliage.¹⁸ Beyond the crop of this book's cover, somebody—presumably the house's owner—is in the garden, a little stooped, looking away from the road and its incessant traffic. The inclination of the trees, with their full fledge of leaves, registers a stiffening westerly breeze, the unsettled weather scribed in those dark clouds directly above. Judging from the shadow cast by the coach, it is mid-afternoon.

Keats knew this road like the back of his hand. At different times between March 1817 and September 1820, he lived a mile further north in the London suburb of Hampstead. He first took lodgings there just below the Vale of Health in tree-lined Well Walk, where his brother Tom died of tuberculosis in December 1818. Afterwards, he moved with his friend Charles Brown into the semi-detached villa known as Wentworth Place ('Keats House' today). Just as the terrain to the rear of Constable's easel features often in Keats's letters and makes its way into the poetry—to the chagrin of reviewers, who recognised fashionable Hampstead's suburban avenues and open countryside in Keatsian phrases such as 'leafy luxuries'¹⁹—the impastoed vista to the south gestures to other important periods in Keats's mature biography, at other of Keats's places. The hazy skyline is punctuated by the imposing dome and clock towers of St Paul's Cathedral and, further along 'Cockney' Cheapside to the east, by the tiered steeple of St Mary Le Bow Church.²⁰ Keats was well acquainted with this area of London, too. Between November 1816 and March 1817, he rented at 76 Cheapside with his brothers George and Tom, a little way up from where 'labourers of the lowest description' could be found plying for hire every morning.²¹ He also knew the territory beyond that, south of the river: in 1815–1816, during his medical studies at Guy's Hospital, he'd moved into digs in St Thomas's Street, off Southwark High Street just beneath the hospital, relocating in September 1816 to dismal Dean Street (now called Weston Street), amid the Borough's 'dirt, turnings and windings' (*LJK*, I, 114).

Keats's places were by no means confined to London. The poet travelled often and, within the bounds of the British Isles, widely. In 1816, he holidayed in Margate. In 1817, he visited the Isle of Wight, Oxford, Hastings, Canterbury, Margate again and Stratford. 1818 saw excursions to Teignmouth in Devon and, during a gruelling two-month walking tour, Keats explored parts of the Lake District, the Scottish Highlands and Ireland, way faring to such tourist spots as Burns's cottage, catching sight of Aisla Craig and taking an adventurous ferry trip to Fingal's Cave on the uninhabited Isle of Staffa. In 1819, he went to Chichester, Bedhampton and Winchester, and returned to the Isle of Wight. In 1820, he set sail for Italy, arriving in Naples before travelling along the Via Appia to Rome, his final journey. The means of conveyance to these near- and far-flung locales have as much claim to be considered among Keats's places as the destinations themselves. Keats is a spatial, not

merely a geographical poet, sensitised to space (including moving spaces) as well as to place. For instance, he spent thirty-four days cooped up with his friend and nurse Joseph Severn aboard the brig *Maria Crowther* en route to Italy. His experience of this lengthy voyage, by turns becalmed, storm-tossed and then confined for eleven days to a foul-smelling cabin in quarantine (a space he brilliantly theorises: 'I do not feel in the world'; *LJK*, II, 349), might easily have formed the basis of a chapter in this volume.²²

The contributors to *Keats's Places* take full account of the poet's peripateticism, sensitive to Keats on the move—to the man who was happy covering more than a dozen miles a day on foot or travelling seventy-five miles overnight in a coach. (No fewer than five essays address aspects of Keats's travels.) This study is also fascinated by the relational aspects of the landscapes, resorts, watering-holes and boltholes that Keats visited and the capital prospects to which he always returned.

3 51.5556°N, 0.1762°W

If modern readers often struggle to connect Keats with specific localities, his first audiences closely identified him with place—with 'rich and elevated' suburban Hampstead to London's north west.²³ In Keats's day, as now, the settlement was flourishing. In 1830, Thomas Moule noted that due to a natural situation that afforded 'delightful views of the metropolis', together with the 'influence of fashion', Hampstead had become a 'large and populous village'.²⁴ Stylish Hampstead was home and haunt of Keats's poetic and political mentor Leigh Hunt, radical editor of the *Examiner* and author of scandalous verse romance, *The Story of Rimini* (1816). Just as *Rimini's* experiments with a chatty, colloquial style had baited the Augustan taste of conservative reviewers, who derided Hunt's diction as a 'chaotic jargon', the *Examiner* had been a thorn in the side of the political establishment since 1808.²⁵ The political circle that Keats joined in December 1816 at Hunt's Vale of Health cottage was defined by its detractors in terms of its distance from London, which lay four miles south of, and 134 metres below, Hampstead's leafy luxuries.²⁶

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine's 'Z.' and the *Quarterly Review's* John Wilson Croker shaped Keats's reception by anchoring the poet and his work in Hunt's suburban culture, distilled into Lockhart's killing phrase, the 'Cockney School of Poetry'. As Fiona Stafford has pointed

out, the aim of *Blackwood's* notorious reviews of 'Cockney' poetry, initiated in October 1817 and taken up by other journals, was precisely 'to put Keats in his place'—to fix him in terms of his geographical and cultural coordinates.²⁷ Rapidly expanding peri-urban Hampstead (Keats's shared semi at Wentworth Place was a new build, as Kenneth Page discusses in this volume) was a trig point both for the young poet's political standpoints and his poetic pretensions. Keats's challenge was to write himself out of, but—as I will argue—also out from, Hampstead.

Two decades later in 1847, by which time Hampstead had been drawn into the mass of urban London, Keats's early Victorian champion Mary Howitt used a brief introductory 'memoir' in *The Poetical Works of Howitt, Milman and Keats* to offer a more well-disposed assessment of Keats's associations with London's then rural–urban fringe:

His favorite sojourn appears to have been Hampstead, the localities of which village were the scenes of his earliest abstractions, and the prompters of many of his best productions.²⁸

Critics in Keats's day, however, lampooned the fact that Hampstead's heath, lanes and lakes, along with its 'tea-sipping' social pretensions, appeared to have given Keats a convenient but preposterous descriptive frame of reference that filled his poetic regions with 'affected descriptions of flowers seen in window-pots'.²⁹ The difficulty for Lockhart, Croker and other '*soi disant* guardians of public taste'³⁰ lay in the fact that the Hampstead prompting grounds of Keats's poetic abstractions—the fields, gardens, hills and 'trees or hidden rills' (11, 14) that Keats translocated into *Isabella's* (suburban) Florentine cartography—were (in William Ulmer's phrase), 'socially situated'.³¹ (Byron, writing to the publisher John Taylor, has this trait in mind when he dubbed Hunt and his Hampstead circle the 'Suburban School'.)³² Even *Isabella's* 'bower of hyacinth' (85) smelled suspiciously of Hampstead: John Loudon's *The Gardener's Magazine* (1828) noted that 'the wild hyacinth abounds' in the 'woods at Caenwood, at Hampstead'.³³ Howitt, in contrast, appreciates that these peripheral localities (settings with their own dynamics, their own syntax) are what prompt Keats to his 'best productions'—to a poetics in which the characteristic well-tended gardens, fragrant bowers and dense under-groves of Keats's imaginative realms are underpinned by a grounding topography. The

anxiety that Keats experiences between his wish to obscure, or rise above, suburban ground and a desire for that underlying topography to be recognised and celebrated as ‘native’ is felt in his poetry as a conditioning tension. In *Isabella*, at any rate, the question of whether we ought to recognise a deliberate ironic and ironising traffic between ‘vulgar’ Hampstead and ‘perfumed’ Florence (432) remains open.

4 PLAQUES AND BUSTS

Just as certain places were important to the development of Keats’s poetics, with posthumous fame Keats has become important to a number of places. There are six plaques commemorating Keats’s connection with buildings in and around London: (1) at 85 Moorgate, which announces: ‘In a House on this Site the “Swan & Hoop” John Keats Poet was Born 1795’; (2) at 8 St Thomas’s Street, whose commemorative script reads: ‘On this site Poet & Apothecary John Keats, & his friend, the Poet, Apothecary, Surgeon & Chemist Henry Stephens shared lodgings while



Fig. 1 Plaque at 8 St Thomas’s Street. Chris Dorney/Alamy

studying at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals (1815–1816)' (Fig. 1); (3) at the 'Keats House', Wentworth Place in Hampstead, where he lived with Charles Brown next to Fanny Brawne and her family, in the street now named 'Keats Grove'—'John Keats, Poet, Lived in this House. B: 1795. D: 1821'; (4) on the modern Guy's Hospital campus, where a wall stone reads 'In Memory of John Keats 1795 Poet 1821 Student Guy's Hospital 1815 to 1816 Apothecary 1816'—the campus also boasts a 'Keats Library' and 'Keats Café', and a bronze statue of Keats sits in the grounds of the old hospital building; (5) at Church Street, Edmonton (now a row of shops called 'Keats Parade') where Keats's grandmother Alice Jennings owned an end-of-terrace house close to the surgery where Keats was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond; the memorial plaque reads: 'On this Site Formerly Stood the Cottage in which the Poet John Keats Served his Apprenticeship (1811–1815) to Thomas Hammond a Surgeon of this Parish'; and (6) at the Enfield school Keats attended from 1803 to 1810 (site now occupied by Enfield Town Railway Station), overseen by head teacher John Clarke, father of Keats's friend Charles Cowden Clarke—the plaque informs passengers that: 'The house which stood on this site was built in the late 17th century. Later it was used as a school and John Keats was educated here. In 1849 it became the station house and was demolished in 1872'. To the list should also be added the marble bust of Keats in Hampstead Parish Church, donated in 1894—the first memorial to Keats in Britain—whose plinth is inscribed: 'To the Ever Living Memory of John Keats This Monument is erected by Americans MDCCCXCIV' (Fig. 2).

Outside London, there is a plaque on the house at 11 Eastgate Square, Chichester, where Keats stayed with his friend Charles Dilke, arriving on St Agnes's Day, 20 January 1819, which reads: 'Here Keats began to write "The Eve of St Agnes" 1819'. In 2017, a life size bronze sculpture of a jaunty looking seated Keats was unveiled across the road in the town centre. In nearby Bedhampton, the Old Mill House is adorned with a stone plaque inscribed: 'In this house in 1819 John Keats finished his poem "The Eve of St Agnes" and here in 1820 he spent his last night in England'.³⁴ The wooden entrance sign to the village includes carved lines from *Endymion*. A stone plaque at the 'Keats House' in Rome beside the Spanish Steps, where Keats died in February 1821, proclaims: 'L'inglese poeta Giovanni Keats / mente meravigliosa quanto precoce / morì in questa casa / li 24 febbraio 1821 / ventesimosesto



Fig. 2 Bust of Keats in the Parish Church of St John-at-Hampstead. Alamy

dell'età sua | The Young English Poet John Keats Died in this House on the 24th February 1821 aged 25'.³⁵ There is also a memorial plaque on the wall of the Protestant Cemetery in that city, and a gravestone.

In Teignmouth, the house that Keats and his brothers rented at 20 The Strand (today Northumberland Place) during their stay in December 1817 is now called 'Keats House', and bears a plaque that records: 'The

Poet Keats Resided here in the Year 1818'. A second-floor holiday apartment in the building, which advertises itself as 'Keats Loft', is not the only rentable accommodation to lay claim to, and market, its status as one of Keats's places. There is a flat leased to the Landmark Trust above 'Keats House' at 26 Piazza di Spagna on Rome's Spanish Steps, and local B&B's in Margate trade on the possibility that Keats stayed in rooms above Hawley Square when he visited in 1816 and 1817. Similarly, on the Isle of Wight, Eglantine Cottage in Shanklin, where Keats lodged, is now a hotel called 'Keats Cottage'. Not to be outdone in Keats tourism, Winchester tourist board promotes a popular 'Keats Walk' around the market city and its environs, where visitors can footstep with the poet. The Mercure Box Hill Burford Bridge Hotel, Surrey, where Keats finished *Endymion* in November 1817, advertises a 'Keats Suite'. In 'A Walk Through Surrey' (1879), Mortimer Collins recorded an anecdote about Keats's stay in the hotel. Keats, it runs, was sitting in the foyer reciting the roundelay sung by the Indian Maid in *Endymion*:

For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
 For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
 And cold mushrooms
 (*Endymion*, IV, 232–34)

A waiter, mistaking the effusion for a poetic summons, supposedly rushed off to return with a decanter of sherry and a plate of uncooked mushrooms.³⁶

We might think of this geographical 'bringing together' as an atlas of memorialisation, as the coordinates of commemoration—as the grid references of our desire to connect Keats-the-man with physical locations. In extension, one of the key objectives of *Keats's Places* is to identify and calibrate the processes through which actual geophysical space is laid out and reorganised into the designed landscapes and built structures of Keats's poetry.

5 TRANSLOCATIONS

If Burford Bridge Hotel is understandably pleased to associate itself with Keats, Keats in a sense anticipated the compliment, writing the 224-metre summit at whose foot it stands into the poem he was finishing during his visit.³⁷ Box Hill provides a clear topographical template for *Endymion*'s mythical hillsapes:

Now,
 Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
 Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
 Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;
 And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
 Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?

(*Endymion*, IV, 669–74)

Keats's epic version of Box Hill is locally, loco-descriptively, accurate: *Kearsley's Traveller's Entertaining Guide* notes that in 1801 the north part of Box Hill was 'covered in yews',³⁸ and as Nicholas Roe observes, 'ancient yew ... trees still cover the summit'.³⁹ Keats's detractors, however, identified such faithful representations and celebrations of the topography of London and its environs as a deplorable 'Cockney' trait, one that had given rise to a ludicrous transplanting—and transvaluing—of local geographic features into a would-be serious epic. *Endymion*'s use of scenery too obviously derived from popular south coast seaside resorts, metropolitan settings and local hills drew, for instance, a stinging rebuttal from Lockhart, who quipped that the epic's tumultuous waterfalls flowed from 'cascades heard at Vauxhall'.⁴⁰

Vauxhall pleasure gardens was a popular attraction situated on the south bank of the River Thames, near to Keats's Southwark lodgings. We know that Keats visited Vauxhall at least once in Summer 1814.⁴¹ Entertainments included hot-air balloons, fireworks and tightrope walkers as well as caves and grottos, a 'fountain of real water', Chinese pavilions, a grand Rotunda (with an 'umbrella' roof), a 'submarine cavern', 'water-works' (with a backdrop 'consisting of a water-fall, castles and a fine romantic landscape behind it'), and a cascade animated with tin strips.⁴² Amid all this, along the notorious Dark Walks, prostitutes did brisk business.⁴³ Lockhart is right to be suspicious about the possible presence of Vauxhall in *Endymion*. The following chaotically 'mingled' descriptions (conjuring scenes when Keats's brooding hero, following an encounter with a fountain nymph, 'dive[s] into the deepest' abyss) seem to recall the Regency pleasure ground's four-shilling attractions.⁴⁴

Dark, nor light,
 The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
 But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;
 A dusky empire and its diadems;
 One faint eternal eventide of gems.
 Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,

Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,
 With all its lines abrupt and angular:
 Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star
 Through a vast antre; then the metal woof,
 Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof,
 Curves hugely: now, far in the deep abyss,
 It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
 Fancy into belief: anon it leads
 Through winding passages, where sameness breeds
 Vexing conceptions of some sudden change;
 Whether to silver grotts, or giant range
 Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
 Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge
 Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
 Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth
 A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
 But as the murmuring surge.

(*Endymion*, II, 221–43)

Has Keats's own fancy been 'hissed' into belief by Vauxhall Gardens' fizzing firework displays, artificial waterfalls, columns and illuminated walks beneath trees hung with sparkling glass lamps? Suggestive, certainly, in the context of the 'metal roof' and 'eventide of gems' in the above passage is the Proprietors' own description of the Gardens' vaulted colonnades with two hundred cast iron pillars and an 'arched roof of iron frame-work, covered with canvas ... richly illuminated within'.⁴⁵ Moreover, since June 1816 access to the attractions had been provided by the newly built Vauxhall Bridge, of which *Endymion*'s 'fantastic bridge/ Athwart a flood of crystal' is perhaps a version.⁴⁶ This key place of metropolitan popular culture on the banks of The Thames, then, appears to present another example of the kinds of translocations and displacements that occurred between geophysical spaces and spatial forms known to Keats and the renditions of landscapes staged in his poetic imagination. *Endymion*'s 'quick footsteps' might seem to be following Vauxhall's grand 'Illuminated Covered Walk', en route perhaps to a concert the shepherd boy will enjoy from one of the Gardens' open-air supper boxes, where a plate of ham cost a shilling, and a pot of stout 8 pence (Fig. 3).⁴⁷

It is not impossible that *Endymion*'s Indian Maid herself was first glimpsed by Keats at the pleasure gardens, whose groves and avenues crackled with the possibility of sexual encounters. During his visit

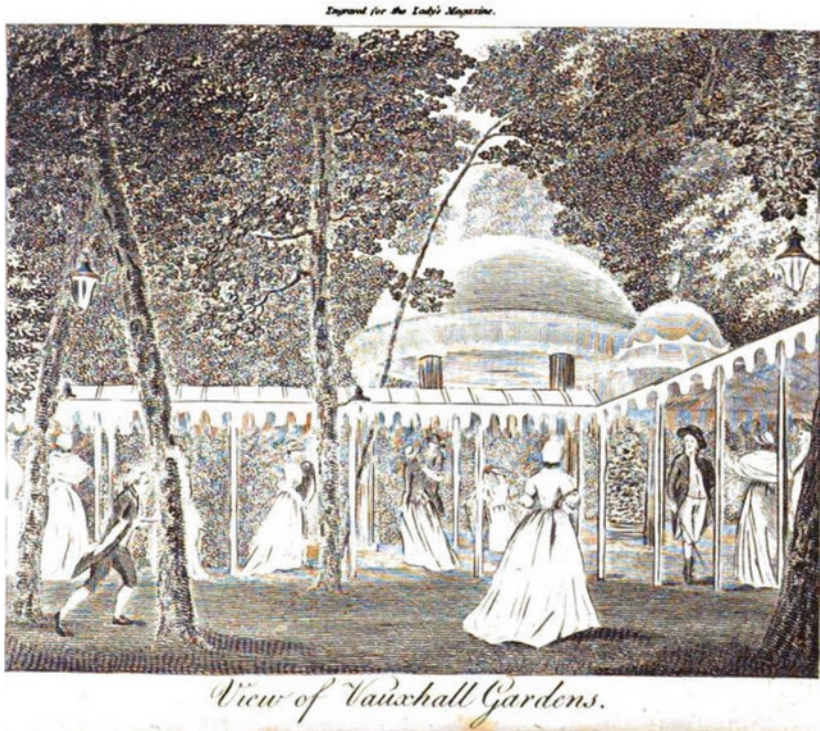


Fig. 3 View of Vauxhall Gardens, engraved for the *Lady's Magazine*, 30 (1799), supplemental

in 1814, Keats's head had been turned by a woman with 'beamy' eyes whom he praised in his early poem, 'Fill for me a brimming bowl'. Perhaps she, or one of the figures from the Garden's dozens of painted scenes, found her way into *Endymion* as the 'halo' of Keats's memory (28). In 1812, one of Vauxhall's main attractions, the Rotunda (previously the Music Room) was repaired, enlarged and its interior decorated so that its appearance was 'that of an Indian garden-room', with supporting columns 'of a gorgeous Indian character', and lamp-lit walls painted to give 'four fine views in Hindoostan'.⁴⁸ An open recess on one side of the Rotunda was theatrically 'painted with Indian views', and the 'frontispiece ... formed of foreign trees' (pp. 16–17). Opposite the Rotunda in the Saloon or Picture Room was displayed 'a most