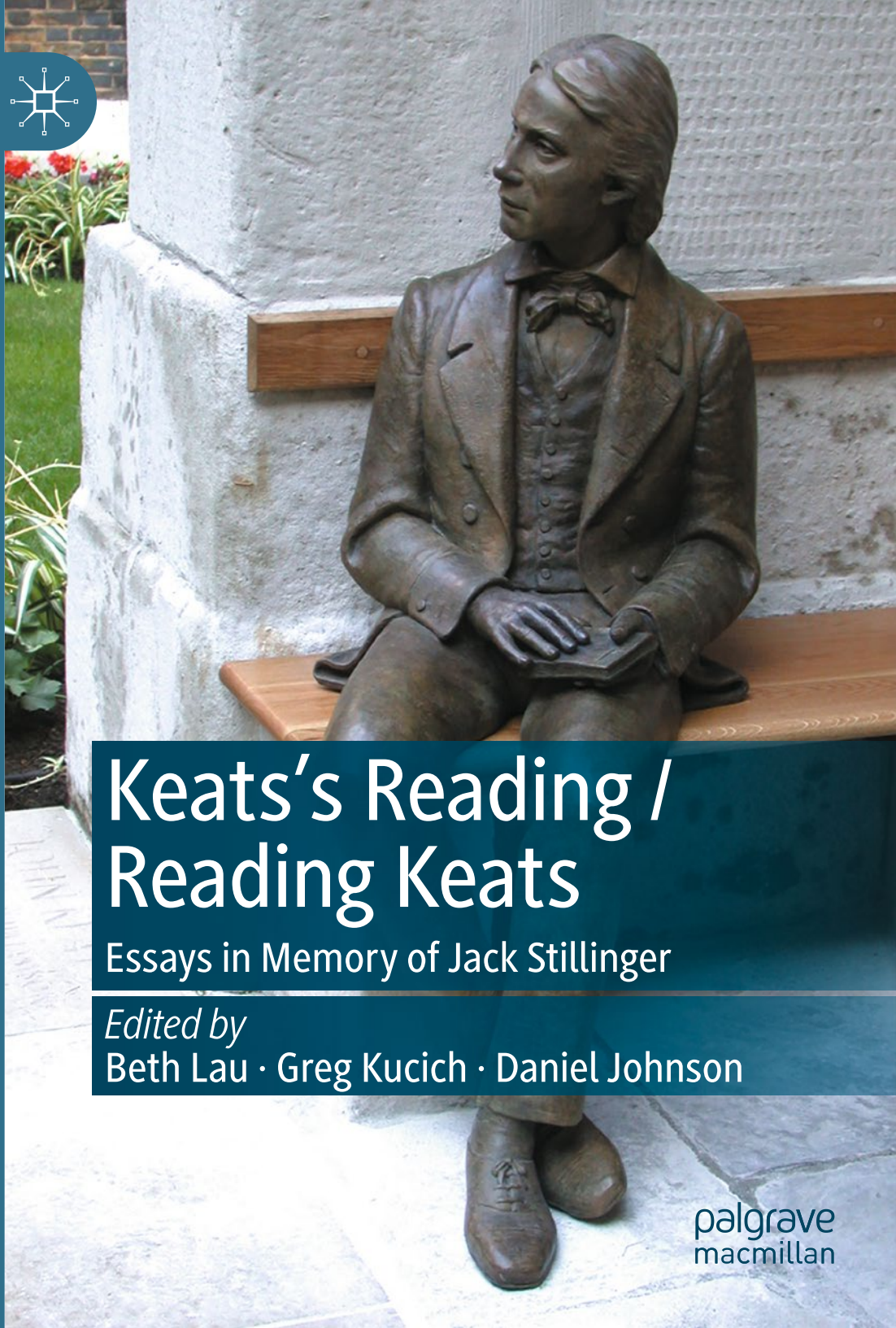

Keats's Reading / Reading Keats

Essays in Memory of Jack Stillinger

Edited by

Beth Lau · Greg Kucich · Daniel Johnson

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Editors
Beth Lau
California State University,
Long Beach
Long Beach, CA, USA

Daniel Johnson
University of Notre Dame
South Bend, IN, USA

Greg Kucich
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN, USA

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Jack Stillinger **1950**. (Courtesy of Tom Sti**llinger)**

Jack Stillinger 2001. (Photo courtesy of the University of Illinois Archives at Urbana-Champaign, Record Series 39/2/25)

Jack Stillinger: In Memoriam 1931–2020

Keats's Reading/Reading Keats honors the life and legacy of Jack Stillinger, one of if not *the* foremost Keats scholar(s) of the twentieth century. I was Jack's student and dissertation advisee at University of Illinois, but everyone in this collection has learned from and been profoundly influenced by Jack's ground-breaking work on Keats and other Romantic writers. Jack was unusual in that he excelled both as a scrupulous editor and as a brilliant, perceptive critic. His major editorial contribution to Keats studies is *The Poems of John Keats* (1978), which is likely to remain the definitive edition for generations.[1] This book was preceded by *The Texts of Keats's Poems* (1974), which clearly traced the origin and transmission history of each of Keats's poems; evaluated the authority of holographs, transcripts, and early printed versions; and in the process made a case that a new, more accurate edition of the poetry was needed. Even after he himself produced that more correct edition (he states in the Preface to *The Poems of John Keats* that he was in the "anomalous position of having just written a book of advice addressed, in effect, to myself" [vi]), *The Texts of Keats's Poems* remains valuable in its own right. In 1982, Jack published a paperback, teaching edition of Keats's *Complete Poems*, which contains less textual apparatus than the scholarly edition and instead features a section of helpful explanatory notes. Jack continued to make available key documents pertaining to the composition, revision, and transmission of Keats's poems when in the 1980s he edited multiple facsimile volumes of poetry manuscripts housed in the Harvard, Huntington, Pierpont Morgan, British,

and New York Public Libraries. Together, the various afore-cited publications provide virtually all the primary materials and core information, enhanced by Jack's astute weighing of evidence, that students and scholars require to study the texts of Keats's poetry.

Jack learned editorial practice from Hyder Rollins, who was working on his magisterial edition of Keats's letters when Jack was a graduate student at Harvard. One finds numerous footnotes crediting Jack's research throughout the *Letters*. Jack's dissertation was an edition of the letters of Charles Armitage Brown, which was eventually published and remains an important resource. Not all the writers Jack edited were from the Romantic period; he is the leading expert on John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, which he edited three times (1961, 1969, and 1981), and he also published an edition of Anthony Munday's sixteenth-century poem, *Zelauto: The Fountaine of Fame* (1963). In 1965 Jack published his valuable Riverside edition of Wordsworth's *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, a copy of which many of us continue to consult for its reliable texts and helpful notes.

While Jack was engaged in this important editorial work, he was also revolutionizing Keats studies with his bold new readings of the poetry, beginning with his essay "The Hoodwinking of Madeline: Skepticism in *The Eve of St. Agnes*," first published in 1961. This article overturns previous interpretations of the poem as a lush, sensuous love story by characterizing Porphyro as a nefarious peeping Tom and Madeline as a deluded dreamer whose absorption in fantasy allows her to be seduced and betrayed. The essay is a classic that has been frequently reprinted and will forever have a prominent place in the history of *St. Agnes* criticism. Jack went on to publish numerous articles in which he applied the same central thesis to other Keats poems, thereby articulating a unified interpretation of the poet's career. According to this view, after a brief period in which Keats sought to escape the harsh realities of life via a visionary imagination, he increasingly came to doubt and reject that strategy. Keats's best poems, Jack argued, follow an "excursion and return" structure in which speakers or characters begin in the actual world, mentally travel to an ideal realm only to find it incompatible with human needs, and then return to the real with an enhanced appreciation of its worth.[2] Eventually the various essays that propose this enormously influential reading of Keats's poetry were collected in *The Hoodwinking of Madeline and Other Essays on Keats's Poems* (1971).

In the 1990s, Jack began to explore new directions. Instead of advocating a unified reading of Keats's (and other Romantic poets') work, he argued for multiplicity and complexity in what he called the three "principal elements of the literary transaction—author, text, and reader" (*Romantic Complexity* 93). According to this approach, authors are conflicted individuals; instead of composing in solitude, they enlist various other people in the creation of their works; poems exist in multiple versions, all of which have equal authority; and each reader perceives a different meaning in any literary text, all of which meanings are valid. Jack addresses each one of these sources of complexity, respectively, in his books *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (1991), *Coleridge and Textual Instability* (1994), and *Reading "The Eve of St. Agnes": The Multiples of Complex Literary Transaction* (1999). His 2006 volume, *Romantic Complexity: Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth*, brings together essays that appeared in those books as well as in other publications from the 1970s onward.

Besides these major publications, Jack made other important contributions to the profession. As the Selected Bibliography indicates, he wrote scores of reviews for virtually every major book on Keats published during his career, as well as many on other nineteenth-century writers. He also wrote the essay on Keats for the fourth edition of the valuable reference work, *The English Romantic Poets: A Review of Research and Criticism* (1985). This piece remains an extremely helpful overview of Keats scholarship (textual, historical, biographical, and critical) from the beginnings to the mid-1980s. In addition, Jack compiled the volume on Keats's odes in the popular *Twentieth-Century Interpretations* series, which thousands of students have consulted since its publication in 1968, as the worn-out, heavily annotated copies in most college libraries will testify. In 1986 Jack became one of the editors of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, one of the most respected and widely used teaching anthologies.

Throughout the half century of Jack's career, his work has remained relevant and widely consulted, even though he neither adopted the latest critical fads nor reacted against them. He had a remarkable ability to identify gaps or problems in the field, raise central questions, and provide sensible, compelling answers and solutions. He could synthesize and coherently organize vast amounts of complex information and present it in clear and straightforward terms. His writing is always lucid and logical,

comprehensible to undergraduates and nonacademic readers as well as to fellow professors. Finally, his work is a model of accuracy, with its facts, sources, and quotations exhaustively checked and rechecked to eliminate errors.

On a more personal level, anyone who ever consulted Jack with a query or request learned how prompt and generous he was in helping colleagues. In an astonishingly short period of time, he would reply with the information, letter of recommendation, evaluation of an essay, or other assistance that was sought. In my files I retain many drafts of projects from my dissertation onward enriched with Jack's incisive editorial comments in his characteristic red ink, querying dubious statements, correcting facts, grammar, and punctuation, and thereby conveying valuable, sometimes humbling, lessons in accurate and responsible scholarship as well as in sharp and correct writing.

Jack's office at the University of Illinois was on the fourth floor of the main library building, and as a graduate student I made many trips up the flights of stairs to consult with him, rather like the poet-narrator surmounting the stairs to Moneta's shrine in *The Fall of Hyperion*. When I reached the door of the office, however, instead of a stern monitor I was greeted by Jack's smiling, friendly presence, greeting me and inviting me to sit down amidst the treasures that filled the room: shelves stocked with all the major books on Keats and other Romantic writers, typescripts or page proofs of his works in progress, his own microfilm reader for consulting photographic copies of manuscripts (this was in the 1970s), and various Romantic-themed art works and memorabilia, the most significant of which was a life mask of Keats that presided over all. The office truly seemed a sacred space to me and Jack the wizard or oracle in attendance, the fount of knowledge and wise advice. Jack Stillinger embodied to me what it meant to be a successful scholar; no one had as profound and lasting an influence on my own work, however imperfectly I lived up to his model and standards.

This volume was originally intended as a festschrift for Jack, and we looked forward to presenting him with a copy of the published book. To our sorrow, he passed away on April 4, 2020, and our collection became a memorial volume. We derive some comfort from the fact that Jack knew we were working on the project, and his family reported that the news gave him pleasure.

Keats's Reading/Reading Keats explores the influence of creative writers on other writers, but in honoring the exemplary career of Jack Stillinger, it is also a testament to the way important scholars shape and continue to live on in the work of their successors. Few scholars/critics have made as significant an impact or left such an enduring legacy in their field as Jack Stillinger, and the chapters in this collection are a small token of our gratitude for his gift to us.

Beth Lau

Notes

1. For full publication information on Stillinger's books and articles, consult the Selected Bibliography of his works at the end of this volume.
2. Although one can find this characterization of Keats's career in many of Stillinger's essays, I am especially drawing on the Introduction to his edition of Keats's *Complete Poems*, reprinted in *Romantic Complexity* as "What Keats Is About" (especially 5–10).

Acknowledgments

Five poems in Maureen N. McLane's chapter ("Writing on Keats, Writing with Keats: Ghostlier Intonations, Marginalia, and Epigraphs Among Friends—or, My Keats") were previously published in volumes of her poetry: "What I'm Looking For" from *This Blue* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2014); "Mz N Triumph of Life," "Mz N Hater," and "Mz N Hermit" from *Mz N* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2016); "Some Say" from *Some Say* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2017), all to be included in McLane's forthcoming selected poems collection entitled *More Anon: Selected Poems* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux). The eight poems published in Michael O'Neill's chapter ("To Do List," "Hodegetria," "Bookshop," "Scope," "On Hold," "Paths," "Diet," and "Those Days") were previously published in his collection *Return of the Gift* (Arc Publications, 2018). Kelvin Everest's chapter "Keats's Formal Legacy and the Victorians" also appears in his volume *Keats and Shelley: Winds of Light* (Oxford UP, 2021). We thank all these publishers for permission to reprint these works. Thanks also to Tom Stillinger for the wonderful photograph of his father Jack in 1950 (frontispiece) and for other information and assistance.

Contents

Notes on Contributors

John Barnard Emeritus Professor of English, University of Leeds, UK, has published widely on Keats, the second-generation Romantics, and seventeenth-century literature, drama, and book history. His publications include *John Keats* (1987), editions of Keats's poems (1973), his letters (2014), and most recently *John Keats: 21st-Century Oxford Authors* (2017).

Alan Bewell is Professor of English at the University of Toronto, Canada. Much of his recent work has focused on the ways in which the ecological impact of British colonialism upon global natures is reflected in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. He is engaged in a study of British Romanticism and translation.

Paul Chirico is the senior tutor of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, UK, where he also teaches and researches the literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, focusing particularly on the dynamics of literary production, circulation, and readership. He has written extensively on John Clare, including the monograph *John Clare and the Imagination of the Reader* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). He was founding Chair of the John Clare Trust, which established an educational, environmental, and cultural center at Clare's birthplace in the village of Helpston, and is Co-director of the Centre for John Clare Studies at the University of Cambridge.

Kelvin Everest is Emeritus A. C. Bradley Professor of Modern Literature at the University of Liverpool, UK. He has published extensively on

English Romantic poetry, including books, edited collections of essays, chapters, and articles on Blake, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley. He is the editor of the Longman Annotated English Poets edition of the *Complete Poems of Shelley* (six volumes, 1–4 [1989–2014]).

Denise Gigante is the Sadie Dernham Professor of Humanities at Stanford University. She is the author of *The Keats Brothers: The Life of John and George* (2011) and *Book Madness: A Story of Book Collectors in America*, forthcoming from Yale University Press in 2022. She is completing *The Mental Traveller: William Blake*, a study of the illuminated poetry in relation to late Medieval and Renaissance Christian iconography and the literary tradition of the Pilgrimage, to be published as part of the Clarendon Lecture Series by Oxford University Press.

Daniel Johnson is English; Digital Humanities; and Film, Television, and Theatre Librarian at the University of Notre Dame. He has published articles on long eighteenth-century literature and digital humanities. He also co-edited (with Beth Lau and Greg Kucich) a digital edition of Keats's annotated copy of *Paradise Lost*.

Beth Lau is Professor of English Emerita at California State University, Long Beach. She has published numerous studies of Keats's books, reading, and marginalia, including *Keats's Reading of the Romantic Poets* (1991) and *Keats's* Paradise Lost (1998). Other publications include the edited collection *Jane Austen and Sciences of the Mind* (2018).

Maureen N. McLane is Professor of English at New York University, USA. She is the author of two critical monographs—*Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (2008) and *Romanticism and the Human Sciences* (2000)—and co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry* (2008). She has also published seven books of poetry, including *This Blue* (2014), finalist for the National Book Award, as well as an experimental hybrid of memoir and criticism, *My Poets* (2012). She has published widely on balladry, romantic mediality, and contemporary poetics. Her most recent book is *More Anon: Selected Poems* (2021).

Lucy Newlyn taught English for over 30 years at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford, UK, where she is now an emeritus fellow. She has published widely on English Romanticism, including four books and (as editor) the *Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. She is general co-editor of

Edward Thomas, *Prose Writings: A Selected Edition* (2011-) and the author of five collections of poetry as well as a memoir.

Michael O'Neill was Professor of English at the University of Durham, UK, until his death in December 2018. He was a leading scholar of Romantic poetry and an expert on poetic influence, dialogues, and legacies. His many books include *The Human Mind's Imaginings: Conflict and Achievement in Shelley's Poetry* (1989), *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (1997), *The All-Sustaining Air: Romantic Legacies and Renewals in British, American, and Irish Poetry* (2007), *Shelleyan Reimaginings and Influence: New Relations* (2019), and, as editor, *The Cambridge History of English Poetry* (2010). He was also a prize-winning poet and published five collections of poems.

Sarah Powrie is Associate Professor of English at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, Canada. Her research interests include Chaucer's dream visions and early modern responses to medieval literature and philosophy. Her articles have appeared in the *Chaucer Review*, *Modern Philology*, *SEL*, *Studies in Philology*, *Renaissance and Reformation*, and the *John Donne Journal*. She is co-editing a volume titled, *Textual Communities, Textual Selves*, which is under contract with the Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies press.

Jeffrey C. Robinson is an honorary senior research fellow at the University of Glasgow and now living in the USA. Recent publications include: *Unfettering Poetry: The Fancy in British Romanticism* (2005); *Poems for the Millennium, Volume Three: The University of California Book of Romantic and Postromantic Poetry*, with Jerome Rothenberg (2009, and 2010 winner of the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award); *Untam'd Wing: Riffs on Romantic Poetry* (2010); *Active Romanticism: Essays on the Continuum of Innovative Poetry from the 18th Century to the Present* (2015, with Julie Carr); and *Poetic Innovation in Wordsworth 1825-33: Fibres of These Thoughts* (2019).

Charles J. Rzepka has taught at Boston University, in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, for more than four decades. He is the author of *The Self as Mind* (1986), *Sacramental Commodities* (1995), and *Selected Essays in Romantic and American Literature, History, and Culture* (2010), as well as numerous articles on Romantic poetry and crime fiction. His latest book is *Being Cool: The Work of Elmore Leonard* (2013, 2017). His essays have appeared in *PMLA*, *Studies in Romanticism*, *Keats-Shelley Journal,*

European Romantic Review, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, *The Wordsworth Circle*, and *Studies in the Novel.*

Mark Sandy is Professor of English Studies at Durham University, UK. His research interests are Romantic and nineteenth-century poetics and twentieth-century American Literature. His publications include *Poetics of Self and Form in Keats and Shelley* (2005), *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning* (2013), and *Transatlantic Transformations of Romanticism: Aesthetics, Subjectivity and the Environment* (2021).

Henry Weinfield is Professor Emeritus, Program of Liberal Studies, University of Notre Dame, USA. His most recent books are *As the Crow Flies*, a collection of poems (2021); *The Labyrinth of Love*, a translation of the selected sonnets and other poems of Pierre de Ronsard (2021); *The Chimeras*, a translation of *Les Chimères* of Gérard de Nerval (2019); and *The Blank-Verse Tradition from Milton to Stevens: Freethinking and the Crisis of Modernity* (2012). He is the editor of *From the Vast and Versal Lexicon: Selected Poems* by Allen Mandelbaum (2018) and has recent essays in *Modern Philology* and *Milton Quarterly.*

Susan J. Wolfson is Professor of English at Princeton University. She is the author of the award-winning monograph, *Reading John Keats* (2014). Chapters on Keats appear in her books *Romantic Shades and Shadows* (2018), *Borderlines: The Shiftings of Gender in British Romanticism* (2006), *Formal Charges* (1997), and *The Questioning Presence* (1986). She is the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to John Keats* (2001) and *John Keats: A Longman Cultural Edition* (2007) and has written four essays for the online *Keats Letters Project*. She is working on *A Greeting of the Spirit*, 81 selected Keats poems and passages, with accompanying commentaries.

Editions and Abbreviations

Unless otherwise indicated, the following editions are used for the writings of Keats and his circle. These editions are not included in the Works Cited lists for individual chapters.

Keats Circle: *The Keats Circle*: *Letters and Papers and More Letters and Poems of the Keats Circle*. Edited by Hyder E. Rollins, 2nd ed., 2 vols., Harvard UP, 1965.

Letters: *The Letters of John Keats*. Edited by Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols., Harvard UP, 1958.

Poems: *The Poems of John Keats*. Edited by Jack Stillinger, Harvard UP, 1978.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Beth Lau

All writers imitate, borrow from, and build on other writers, but John Keats's poetry is notable for the extent to which it engages with other texts. His first extant poem is "Imitation of Spenser," and throughout his career he composed poems that derive from other people's stories, whether from literary works (*Isabella*, *Lamia*), Greek or Roman mythology (*Endymion*, *Hyperion* [also modeled on Milton's *Paradise Lost*], "Ode to Psyche"), or legend (*The Eve of St. Agnes*, *The Eve of St. Mark*).[1] Other categories of poems in Keats's oeuvre are those addressed to other writers ("To Lord Byron," "Oh Chatterton! How very sad thy fate," "Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair," "To Homer") and those about reading a particular work ("On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," "This pleasant tale is like a little copse," "On *The Story of Rimini*," "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again"). Even non-narrative poems that purport to recount personal feelings, ideas, and experiences contain references to other texts. For example, "To Charles Cowden Clarke" surveys the literature to which Clarke introduced Keats; "I Stood Tip-toe Upon a Little

B. Lau (✉)
California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach, CA, USA
e-mail: beth.lau@csulb.edu

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Hill" concludes with sketches of the Narcissus, Echo, and Endymion myths; and "Ode to a Nightingale" refers to the biblical story of Ruth and probably *King Lear* ("emperor and clown"). The Romantic period supposedly inaugurated the expressive mode of poetry, in which authors (or speakers somewhere on a continuum between autobiographical and fictional) convey their private thoughts and emotions in lyric outbursts, and such works are common in Wordsworth's corpus as well as those of Coleridge, Charlotte Smith, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, among others. The number of Keats's poems that derive from his personal life apart from his reading, however, is remarkably small.[2]

All of Keats's poetry, moreover, is dense with echoes of and allusions to other texts, the tracing of which has comprised a significant portion of scholarship on the poet. As Jack Stillinger observed in 1985, "Keats's critics invoke sources on practically every occasion," so that "Keats criticism carried on without reference to sources is almost unthinkable" ("John Keats" 698–99). A glance at Miriam Allott's annotated edition of Keats's poems gives a sense of the number of borrowings they contain. For example, for "La Belle Dame sans Merci," a short ballad of 48 lines, the sources Allott documents include Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, Alain Chartier's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (a translation of which Keats probably read in *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*), Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Dante's *Inferno*, William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, Chatterton's "An Excelente Balade of Charitie," the ballad "Thomas the Rhymer," Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Wordsworth's "Her eyes are wild" (Allott 500–06).

The paradox, however, is that by composing verse that is heavily dependent on other people's writings, Keats creates highly original works with a voice and style uniquely his own. Henry Weinfield articulates this conundrum when he states that Keats's *Hyperion* "is completely dependent on [*Paradise Lost*], and yet, at the same time, extraordinarily beautiful, resonant, and hence *original* in its own right; indeed, one is tempted to say that the [opening] passage achieves originality not in spite but because of its dependence on Milton's epic" (166). It is interesting to note that Milton himself was characterized in similar terms in Keats's day. In his lecture "On Shakespeare and Milton" (which Keats attended), William Hazlitt claims that

> Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. He is a writer of centos, and yet in originality scarcely inferior to Homer. The power of his mind is stamped on every line. The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials. In reading his works, we feel ourselves under the influence of a mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches to others, becomes more distinct from them. (5: 58)

The neurologist Oliver Sacks has recently offered an account of the creative process that supports Hazlitt's portrayal of Milton's mind and art. "All of us borrow from others, from the culture around us," Sacks writes. The central issue for writers and other artists is "how deeply one assimilates [a borrowing], takes it into oneself, compounds it with one's own experiences and thoughts and feelings, places it in relation to oneself, and expresses it in a new way" (142). For Sacks, this process of creative assimilation starts with intense study and imitation of various models but then requires an incubation period, when the subconscious can "reorganize and synthesize [one's influences] into something of one's own" (130, 140).

Both Hazlitt and Sacks use imagery of disassembling and reconstituting sources to explain how borrowed material is transformed into a writer's unique creation. Keats himself employs similar concepts when he compares the creative process to digestion. In his early sonnet "How many bards gild the lapses of time," he refers to his favorite poets as "the food / Of my delighted fancy" who "throng" into his mind whenever "I sit me down to rhyme." In this metaphor, the poet hungrily devours other texts, which then are broken down and absorbed into his body, providing fuel and nutrition that allow him to bring forth his own literary fruits.

If Keats drew extensively on other texts, his own poetry and also his thoughtful, engaging letters have been a fecund source of inspiration for later writers. In part, the story of Keats's life as an orphan without the status, wealth, or education traditionally required for acceptance into mainstream literary circles, whose talent and ambition nonetheless won him a place "among the English Poets" (Keats, *Letters* 1: 394), has resonated with others, especially those who also feel marginalized from elite culture, such as women and people from working-class backgrounds.[3] Primarily, however, it is the poetry itself, with its sensuous imagery, memorable diction, and thematic richness and complexity, which has appealed to later writers and helped stimulate their own creations. In this manner

are literary canons and traditions developed and perpetuated, as writers read, absorb, and reproduce elements of previous writers' texts in their own compositions. Wordsworth in *Michael* speaks of the "youthful Poets, who … Will be my second self when I am gone" (38–39). *Keats's Reading/Reading Keats* explores Keats's dual position in this chain of transmission, carrying forward the work of previous writers and in turn being kept alive by literary sons and daughters.

Although, as mentioned previously, exploring Keats's indebtedness to other writers has been a persistent feature of scholarship on the poet, the practice has undergone different phases and shifts in popularity. The heyday of what was then called source and influence study was the early twentieth century, when much research focused on tracing echoes of other texts in Keats's poetry. Perhaps the culmination of this type of scholarship is Claude Lee Finney's two-volume *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry* (1936), which addresses almost everything then known about all of Keats's poems, with special attention to sources. When New Criticism gained ascendancy, with its focus on studying poems as autonomous entities that do not depend for their meaning on contextual information about the author's life or times, source and influence study lost favor, and many of the most popular and influential books of the mid-twentieth century—such as those by David Perkins, Stuart Sperry, Jack Stillinger (*Hoodwinking of Madeline*), Morris Dickstein, and Christopher Ricks—chiefly (though not exclusively) provide close readings of Keats's poems and letters. The advent of deconstruction in the 1970s and 1980s likewise discouraged considering literary texts in relation to their authors' reading, as it rejected the notion that those texts refer to anything external to themselves. Post-structuralist theory, however, did introduce the concept of intertextuality, which proposes that literary works inevitably participate in the shared discourses and conventions established by earlier writings, whether or not their authors read particular works.

The issue of literary influence received a major boost with the publication of Walter Jackson Bate's *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (1970) and Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Both Bate and Bloom claim that English writers, beginning in the eighteenth century, began to feel oppressed by the intimidating example of great works of the past and feared they would not be able to match much less excel their exalted predecessors. Bloom's theory follows a Freudian model according to which belated (male) poets engage in an Oedipal struggle with literary forefathers, chiefly Milton. According to Bloom, Romantic

and later poets have to misread earlier works in order to escape from their paralyzing example and create their own strong, original poems.

Bate's and especially Bloom's model of the dynamics of literary influence dominated approaches to the topic for the next several decades, as scholars either agreed with or challenged it. In the latter category, one can place books such as Jonathan Bate's *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (1986), Greg Kucich's *Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism* (1991), and Lucy Newlyn's Paradise Lost *and the Romantic Reader* (1993), which in their chapters on Keats claim that he found Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, respectively, empowering rather than intimidating, and that he accurately drew upon passages and motifs in their works rather than misreading them.

The next major voice to emerge in studies of Keats's relationships with previous writers was Marjorie Levinson in her ground-breaking *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (1988), who resurrected and largely endorsed the claims of contemporary Tory critics (as well as Lord Byron), who labeled Keats a "Cockney" poet lacking the education and social status to write proper English verse. According to Levinson, Bloom's anxiety of influence model does not apply to Keats but only to those poets who regard themselves as legitimate heirs of their national literary tradition. The middle-class Keats, Levinson argues, who felt "disinherited by the Tradition" (10), sought to establish his legitimacy by proving his derivativeness, and this fact accounts for the "fetishized exhibition of other men's words" in his poetry (57).

Levinson's interpretation of Keats's literary borrowings as evidence of his social anxiety and eager desire to gain acceptance into elite literary circles has itself been challenged by subsequent critics. Nicholas Roe, for example, claims that Keats's Cockney style, far from being a reflection of his insecurities and educational deficiencies, constituted a deliberate challenge to the hierarchical literary and political systems of his time. Keats's poetry, Roe argues, should be understood as "a vigorous assault on … cultural exclusivity rather than a quest for 'social legitimacy'" (22), and as such it is allied with and helped to establish the main trends of subsequent British and American poetry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (on this point see also Jeffrey Robinson's essay in this volume). Roe's work, however, like that of many New Historicist scholars, chiefly situates Keats's poetry in the context of contemporary political writings and events, rather than of other literary texts.

Several other recent scholarly and scientific developments are relevant to the study of Keats's poetry in relation to his reading. One such development is a growing challenge to the traditional concept of the Romantic poet as a solitary figure who spontaneously composes wholly original works expressing his unique thoughts and feelings. Works such as Jack Stillinger's *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (1991) and Jeffrey Cox's *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School* (1998), among others, portray Keats embedded in a network of friends, publishers, and fellow writers who influenced his poetry in significant ways, at times amounting almost to co-authorship. The writers Keats read and ardently emulated can also be considered among his poetic collaborators. In addition, studies of readers and reading practices in the Romantic period have gained prominence in recent decades as scholars seek to document what texts were read and how they were experienced at the time.[4] Keats's references in his letters to favorite poetic and prose works, his incorporation of these texts in his poetry, and his notes and markings in books all serve as valuable evidence of reading habits and responses in the period. Finally, current psychology has largely moved away from the Freudian concepts Bloom adopted and toward more empirical studies of the brain and cognition. One of the findings to emerge is that the human mind is especially adept at combining and adding onto existing knowledge rather than inventing from scratch, and the greatest periods of creativity and innovation occur when ideas are freely exchanged and widely disseminated, as occurred with the expansion of the reading public and increase in book publication in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (see Pinker 178, 478–79). Oliver Sacks's account of the creative process as involving emulation and absorption of previous models, quoted above, is consistent with this understanding of the way the mind operates.

The time is ripe for a re-examination of the topic of writers' intertextual dialogues with other writers, drawing on what we have learned from earlier approaches but forging new directions in light of recent studies and interests. The essays in *Keats's Reading/Reading Keats: Essays in Memory of Jack Stillinger* offer fruitful lines of inquiry for such exploration. Together the authors gathered here provide new insights into Keats's reading tastes and habits, his creative process, the ongoing legacy of his poetry (as well as his profound, appealing letters) for later writers, and the dynamics of intertextuality.

This book originated in a conference, also titled "Keats's Reading/Reading Keats," held in London in July 2018 to commemorate the

bicentennial of Keats's serious study of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The conference coincided with the release of the initial beta version of a digital edition of Keats's annotated copy of Milton's epic poem, edited by Daniel Johnson, Beth Lau, and Greg Kucich (http://keatslibrary.org/). This digital edition, the final version of which was released in August 2020, makes widely available the poet's extensive marginalia (both notes and markings of favorite passages) in this major work of English literature and important influence on Keats's poetry and creative development. Marginalia are among the most direct and revealing sources of evidence for how a writer responded to a particular text. We intend to add further examples of books enriched with Keats's marginalia to our website, *The Keats Library*, and we hope this resource, along with the essays in the current collection, will stimulate further study of Keats's reading practices and engagements with other writers.

Keats's Reading/Reading Keats: Essays in Memory of Jack Stillinger comprises four sections that together address the dual components of our project. The first, "Theorizing Keats's Reading," contains three essays that explore major patterns in and implications of the poet's intertextual dialogues with other works. Susan J. Wolfson's "Keats the Reader" closely examines Keats's creative borrowings from other poets in five of his sonnets and the second, unfinished canto of *The Fall of Hyperion*. As Wolfson demonstrates, Keats in his reading was keenly alert to the range of meanings and sound effects of individual words and phrases, so that words may be considered the central nervous system of his poetry. The inventory for this subject is vast, Wolfson claims, because it is virtually synonymous with Keats's phenomenology of reading. Besides minutely tracking Keats's responses to the words of other poets, the essay analyzes several drawings and paintings of Keats depicted in the act of reading, demonstrating that contemporaries considered this activity central to his identity.

John Barnard's "Keats's Metaphors of Reading" considers what Keats's metaphors describing the act of reading can tell us about his experience of reading poetry on the page. As Barnard documents, reading in Keats is variously described as a kind of seeing, traveling, breathing, assaying, or tasting. Nevertheless, his metaphors of reading, particularly in the substantial passage on Shakespeare in his 22 November 1817 letter to Reynolds, make clear that for Keats the essential access to poetry was through the auditory imagination. Poetry for Keats, Barnard concludes, is essentially a spoken art.

In "Keats's Translational Poetics," Alan Bewell challenges the common view that Keats moved away from imitation with the discovery of his own originary voice as he matured as a poet. Instead, Bewell argues, Keats continued to see poetry in translational terms, and his poems should be viewed as inherently dialogic or dyadic. They find their meaning, that is, they actually find their voice, through their relationship to another creative work written in a different time and place. The essay explores Keats's complex understanding of the translational dimensions of poetry in *Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil*, a poem that established the framework of much of his later work.

The fourth essay in this section, Daniel Johnson's "Rereading Keats's Reading in the Digital Realm," describes major features of the digital edition of Keats's annotated copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost* Johnson co-created and considers some of the advantages and disadvantages of publishing Keats's marginalia in this medium. A digital edition enables new kinds of interaction between reader and text, and between different digital projects, partially laying the foundation for a networked effort that could connect historical authors, current cultural institutions, and future scholars in the interpretive enterprise. The digital medium is notoriously unstable, however, and is always at risk of dissolution into very *un*Romantic ruins. Serious electronic texts, then, Johnson argues, take on the responsibilities of both scholarly edition and archive, raising sustainability and standards challenges. By engaging these challenges, the essay proposes, *Keats's* Paradise Lost: *A Digital Edition*, converses not only with Keats, Romantic literary sociology, and annotation history, but also with the future of scholarly commentary.

The next section of the volume, "Keats's Reading," consists of six essays that examine Keats's work in relation to specific earlier authors and texts. In "'Jack a Lanthern' Verse: Of Pots and Precursors and Poetic Value," Charles Rzepka analyzes *Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil*, which he claims offers Keats's most detailed and complex allegory of poetic reception and influence. It is an allegory fraught with anxiety, Rzepka argues, but not, like Harold Bloom's, an anxiety over precursors like Boccaccio. Instead, the essay demonstrates, what haunts *Isabella* is an anxiety of reception, and its source is Keats's female audience.

In "Keats Reading Chaucer: Troilus and Arrested Time in *The Eve of St. Agnes*," Sarah Powrie argues that Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* provided Keats with a narrative scaffold for his fantasy romance of St. Agnes Eve. Identifying with the affective and delicate masculinity of Troilus, Keats