

8 scandal defame. Used as a verb up to the seventeenth century. See Dryden, *The Flower and Leaf* (1700), 606-7, '... for Defence / Against ill Tongues that scandal Innocence'.

9 Nilus-born gipsies ('Egyptians') were thought to originate from that country.

10 *jealous Potiphar* Potiphar was jealous of Joseph, who had attracted the desire of his master's wife.

12 *artists loveborn* | loveborn artists *L, Ladies' Companion, Allott; lovesick artists Odd Fellow*.

ON FAME (II) ('How fevered is the man who cannot look')

Written 30 April 1819. Published 1848. An extempore sonnet, written while Brown was transcribing the preceding poem (*L* II, p. 104). The rhyme scheme is another experiment with the sonnet structure (see headnotes to *To Sleep* and 'If by dull rhymes . . .', pp. 665, 666).  
Title | 1848, G; *untitled Allott*.

1 *How fevered is the man* | How is that Man misled altered to How fever'd is the Man *L*.

7-8 | As if a clear Lake meddling with itself / Should Cloud its pureness with a muddy gloo[m] *L*. *Allott* reports that in *W/2* Woodhouse commented, 'The objection to these lines was probably that "itself" was thus made to rhyme to itself [see l. 5]. But the author . . . forgot that he left an allusion in the 12th line to those thus erased'.

7 *elf* see *Ode to a Nightingale* 73-48 (p. 681).

13 *teasing the world for grace* | teasing the world for grace *over* his own bright name *deface* (*cancelled*) *L*.

14 | *L* gives the cancelled line 'And spoil burn our pleasures in his selfish fire' - The 'ferce miscreed' is the pursuit of fame.

#### 'TWO OR THREE POSTIES'

Written c. 1 May 1819. Published *Forman* (1883). Keats wrote the lines in his letter to Fanny, which is conjecturally assigned to this date by H. E. Rollins (*L* II, p. 56). On 'Two or three' rhymes, see *Forman* (1938-9) IV, pp. 204-5, and *KSF*, IX (1960), p. 85.

2 *simples* plants or herbs used for medicinal purposes.

20 *Mrs* - Mrs Abbey, wife of Richard Abbey who acted as the Keats children's guardian from 1810. Relations between the guardian and his wards were uneasy.

#### ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

Date conjectural. Published *Annals of the Fine Arts*, IV (January 1820), 1820. Text follows 1820, except for one or two minor alterations in punctuation, and a substantive change of punctuation in ll. 49-50 (see note). Variants recorded from *Annals*, George Keats's transcript now in the British Museum (referred to as *BM* - it is reproduced by *Gittings*, 1970, pp. 44-9), and the

transcript in *W/2*. Dated '1819' in Brown's, Dilke's and George Keats's transcripts. As *Gittings* (1970), pp. 69-70, argues, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* was probably written after reading two articles by B. R. Haydon, which were published in the *Examiner* on 2 and 9 May, and which are echoed by Keats's poem (see l. 28n). This *Ode* is usually placed after the *Ode to a Nightingale*, but see headnote (p. 677) for the order adopted here.

Keats's urn is not based on any single Greek vase or urn, but is a composite drawn from several sources. A drawing of the Sosibios Vase was made by Keats from Henry Moses's *A Collection of Antique Vases, Altars, Paterae* . . . (1814), but the Townley and Borghese vases may also have influenced him. Further, see *Jack*, pp. 214-24, 281-9 (Plates XXIX-XXXVII reproduce the main influences, and Plate XXX reproduces Keats's drawing), and N. Machin, 'The Case of the Empty-handed Maenad', *Observer Magazine* (Colour Supplement), 28 February 1965. However, the heifer being led to sacrifice on the South Frieze of the Elgin Marbles probably supplied details for the fourth stanza (*Jack*, p. 219), and Wedgwood's reproductions of classical motifs and forms also played a part. For the latter, see D. E. Robinson's 'Ode on a "New Etrurian Urn" (A Reflection of Wedgwood Ware in the Poetic Imagery of John Keats)', *KSF*, XII (1963), pp. 11-35. Keats himself had earlier described a pagan sacrifice in *To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.* 20-22 (see ll. 31-40n) and *Endymion* I, 106-231. *De Selincourt* points out the thematic similarity between Wordsworth's sonnet *Upon the Sight of a Beautiful Picture* (1815) and Keats's *Ode*, and *Gittings* (1954), pp. 136-7, believes that Keats's reading of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* gave 'hints for the main theme and much of the general philosophy'.

The *Ode*'s success or failure as a poem, and its meaning, have been much debated. Discussion has centred on the interpretation of the poem's last two lines (see ll. 49-50n). E. Wasserman in his *The Finer Tone* (1953) decides, 'The intention of the poem must be to hold up art as the source of the highest form of wisdom', and uses Keats's letter of 22 November 1817 (*L* I, pp. 184-6) and the passage on the 'Pleasure Thermometer' (*Endymion* I, 777 ff.) to support his view. However, *Murry* (1930), pp. 71-92, related its meaning to Keats's ideas on the 'Vale of Soul-making', written shortly before the *Ode* (*L* II, pp. 101-4, quoted in part in headnote to *Ode to Psyche*, p. 668). F. W. Bateson in *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (1950), pp. 217-22, discerns '... a necessity for uniting Romanticism ("beauty") and realism ("truth")', the subconscious with the conscious mind, the feeling with the concept, poetry and philosophy', while Douglas Bush argues that Keats 'cannot convince himself that love and beauty on marble are better than flesh-and-blood experience' in his 'Keats and his Ideas' in *The Major English Romantic Poets*, ed. C. D. Thorpe et al. (1957), p. 241. Cleanth Brooks's important essay, 'Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes', in *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947), pp. 139-52, should be compared with the reply by William Empson in *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951), pp. 368-74. See also *Bate* (1963), pp. 510-20. An account of the major interpretations is given by *Pettet*, pp. 375-81; see also P. Hobsbaum, 'The "Philosophy" of the Grecian Urn; A Consensus

of Readings', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, XV (1965). Several important readings are brought together in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Keats's Odes*, ed. J. C. Stillingner (1968), and most general works on Keats contain further discussions.

Title ] On a Grecian Urn *Annals*. Keats realized that the function of Grecian urns was to preserve the ashes of the dead - 'Why, I have shed / An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold-dead' (*Endymion* III, 431-2). See also *Lamia* II, 94.

1 *still unravished bride of quietness* in the *Annals* version, a comma is added after 'still', so making the word into an adjective ('motionless'). The punctuation in 1820, etc., makes 'still' an adverb, suggesting that the bride may yet be ravished, without denying the possibility of a play on the adjectival sense. The urn is intact - unravished as a bride, or unbroken as an art object. Its virginal chastity is 'unravished' either by the infidelity of speaking, or by a marital consummation with 'quietness'.

2 *foster-child of silence and slow time* since the death of its maker (its father), the urn has been fostered by time and silence.

3 *Sylvan historian* the pictures on the urn's sides depicting a 'flowery tale' from the past make it an 'historian', both in the sense of tale-teller and recorder of the past. 'Sylvan' means 'belonging to the woods' (compare 'Pastoral', l. 45 and n).

8 *men or gods* ] Gods or Men *Annals*. Compare 'deities or mortals' (l. 6). Keats and his contemporaries were uncertain of the meaning of the figures on Greek vases and urns.

9 *What mad pursuit?* ] What love? what dance? *BM, W2, Annals*.

10 *imbrel's tambourines*.

11-14 compare Wordsworth, *The Excursion* (1814) II, 710-12, 'Music of finer tone; a harmony / So do I call it, though it be the hand / Of silence, though there be no voice. . . .'

13 *sensual* belonging to the world of the senses.

15-30 these lines are often interpreted as showing Keats's ambivalent feelings towards the urn, since the lovers remain perpetually unsatisfied.

16 *can those trees be bare* ] bid the spring adieu *Annals*.

18 *yet* ] O *BM, W2, Annals*.

19-20 compare *Ode to a Nightingale* 29-30.

21, 23, 25 for the repetition of 'happy' here, compare *Ode to Psyche* 22, 'O happy, happy dove'; and *Ode to a Nightingale* 5-6.

28 *All breathing human passion [ar above* in 1818 Hazlitt said in a lecture, 'Greek statues are marble to the touch and to the heart. . . . In their faultless excellence they appear sufficient to themselves. By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of passion or suffering' (*Works*, ed. P. P. Howe [1930-4] V, p. 11). B. R. Haydon, in the second of his articles on Raphael's cartoon, *The Sacrifice at Lystra*, claimed that he 'seemed to disdain to imitate creatures who are weak enough to yield to passion and took refuge from the poverty of this world's materials in . . . imagining a higher order of beings and a world of his

own' (*Examiner*, 9 May 1819). For the possible influence of Haydon's articles on the poem, see J. R. MacGillivray, *TLS*, 9 July 1938, pp. 465-6.

28-30 *Bate* (1963), p. 514 comments '... more is being deprived the figures on the urn than is bestowed. They are now conceived negatively, through what they lack; and in only the weak final line does their lack suggest much advantage. "All breathing human passion" is a weighted phrase: "above", half ironic, loses its evaluative force and begins to connote unawareness. "Cloy'd" at least implies fulfillment. Finally a "heart high-sorrowful" is able to experience the mystery of sorrow. . . .'

30/31 *Jack*, p. 286, thinks that the poem initially ended here.

31-40 compare with the description of a Greek sacrifice in *To J. H. Reynolds*, *Esq.* 20-22, 'The sacrifice goes on; the pontiff knife / Gloams in the sun, the milk-white heifer lows, / The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows. . . . The heifer lowing at the skies' (l. 33) is probably based on a detail in the Elgin Marbles, while the passage as a whole owes a debt to Claude Lorraine's paintings, particularly perhaps his *View of Delphi with a Procession* and his *Landscape with the Father of Psyche sacrificing at the Milesian Temple of Apollo* (see *Jack*, pp. 219-22).

34 *flanks* ] sides *BM, W2*.

37-40 *emptied . . . desolate* the description of the festival of Hyacinthia in *Lemprière* concludes, '... all were eager to be present at the games, and the city was almost desolate, and without inhabitants'. The effect of the two words here, which can be read as suggestive of the implicit emptiness of the urn's world, may be compared with the use of 'forlorn' in *Ode to a Nightingale* 71-2, and prepares for 'Cold Pastoral' in l. 45.

41 *O Attic shape! Fair attitude!* 'Attic' means Grecian. 'Attitude' is used both with the technical sense of 'The disposition of a figure in statuary or painting; hence, the posture given to it', and 'A posture of the body proper to or implying some mental action or state' (*OED*). Compare *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem* 7. The modern meaning, 'habitual mode of regarding anything', developed only in the mid-nineteenth century.

41-2 *with brede* ] *Of marble men and maidens overwrought* on the force of 'marble', see l. 28n. 'Brede' puns on 'breed' and 'brede', a variant spelling of braid, used as a poeticism for anything interwoven or plaited. Collins's *Ode to Evening* (1747), 7, has, 'With brede ethereal wove. . . . The reference is to the figures depicted moving round the urn. 'Overwrought' means fashioned over the surface of the urn, but it could also mean at this period, 'Exhausted by overwork; worked up to too high a pitch; over-excited' (*OED*). According to the *OED*, the modern sense, 'Elaborated to excess; over-laboured', was not used until 1839.

42 *maidens overwrought* ] maidens, overwrought *BM, W2*.

44 *tease us out of thought* two, not necessarily exclusive, readings are possible: either, defeats our attempts to reason, or, raises us beyond merely intellectual speculation to an intuitive level. Keats had earlier used the phrase in *To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.* 77. In the *Ode to a Nightingale* 34 it is the 'dull

brain' that 'perplexes and retards', and in the *Ode to Psyche* the poet sees the vision as he wanders 'thoughtlessly' (l. 7).

45 *Cold Pastoral* the urn is immortal, but also cold and inhuman. Compare Keats's use of 'cold Beauty' in *On Visiting the Tomb of Burns* 8. As a noun, 'pastoral' refers to the genre portraying the life of shepherds.

47 *shalt* ] wilt *BM, W2, Annals*.

48 *a* ] as *BM, W2*.

49-50 ] Beauty is truth, - Truth Beauty, - that is all / Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know. *BM, W2*; Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty. - That is all / Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know. *Annals*; 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' - that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. 1820, *Garrod (OSA), Allott; G follows 1820, but omits the inverted commas*. This is a much debated crux. The problem is who speaks the last lines. Unfortunately, no autograph MS exists for this poem, though Keats saw the 1820 volume through the press, which gives it some priority. The following interpretations are possible:

1 both lines are spoken by the urn, and addressed to man

2 the lines are spoken by the poet to the urn

3 the lines are spoken by the poet to the figures on the urn

4 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' is spoken by the urn, and the remainder is the poet speaking to his readers

5 the motto, as in preceding reading, is spoken by the urn, but the poet then addresses the urn, not mankind.

Critics have argued for all these possibilities, and the lack of any definitive evidence means that the punctuation adopted must depend upon the reader's sense of the whole poem. However, it should be pointed out that in ll. 44-8 Keats identifies himself with mankind ('us', 'ours'), while the last two lines switch to 'Ye', and so address mankind, which makes 1 seem the more likely meaning, and I have punctuated the 1820 text accordingly. (The inverted commas round the motto in 1820 emphasize its aphoristic quality, suggesting that it is in an inscription on the urn itself - it is possible that 1820 avoided enclosing both lines in inverted commas because the resultant "... " would have been ungainly. For Keats's use of quotation, compare *To Charles Cowden Clarke* 100.) Further, see A. Whitley, 'The Message of the Grecian Urn', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, V (1953), pp. 1-3, and *Stillinger*, pp. 167-73. The reading adopted here means that Keats does not necessarily identify himself with the urn's message.

Many parallels for the Beauty-Truth formulation have been cited, ranging from Plato to Boileau's 'Rien n'est beau que le vrai' (*Épître* IX, 43), to Shaftesbury's 'all Beauty is TRUTH' (*Sensus Communis* IV iii). The relationship between the two terms was, however, a widespread topic in the eighteenth century, and was a common Romantic concern. In November 1817 Keats had written, 'What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth - whether it existed before or not' (*L I*, p. 184), and in October 1818 he spoke of '... the yearning Passion I have for the beautiful, connected and made one with the ambition of my intellect' (*L I*, p. 404). It is connected with his idea that

'the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth...' (*L I*, p. 192). The final lines are seen by some critics as a blemish because grammatically meaningless (T. S. Eliot), as irrelevant (Murry), as a strained attempt to resolve the tensions in the poem; or as an appropriate dramatization of the urn's view of things (Cleath Brooks).

#### ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

Dated 'May 1819' in *W1-2*, but exact date conjectural. Normally placed before the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The main evidence for the conventional dating early in May is twofold. Metrically the *Ode to a Nightingale* (with the shorter eighth line) stands between the *Ode to Psyche* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (which has a long eighth line, like the two later odes). Secondly, the parallels between the second stanza and Keats's letter to Fanny of 1(?) May 1819 (see ll. 11-137) argue for a date c. 1 May. However, there are other parallels with much earlier letters in the poem (see l. 697). The fifth stanza, with its reference to 'mid-May's eldest child' (l. 48) and to the Hawthorn, etc. (see ll. 44-507), suggests the poem was written in the middle of the month. Hence, it is given here after the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (possibly written c. 9 May, see headnote p. 648). *Ward* (1963), pp. 283, 433, also argues for the later dating.

Published *Annals of the Fine Arts*, July 1819, 1820. Some variants are noted from Keats's draft, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (C), and *Annals*. The draft MS is reproduced in *Gittings* (1970), pp. 36-43.

Twenty years after the event, Charles Brown recalled the poem's composition: 'In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest in my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took a chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, containing his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his "Ode to a Nightingale", a poem which has been the delight of every one' (*KC II*, p. 65). Brown's story has been called into doubt because Keats's draft (C) is written on two sheets of paper only. *Gittings* (1970), p. 65, thinks that Brown conflated his memories of the poem's composition with Keats's later struggle with the MS of the *Ode on Indolence*. The spring of 1819 was unusually warm (see ll. 44-507), and Keats's moods were always influenced by the weather - see, for instance, his reaction against the cold summer of Scotland in *On Visiting the Tomb of Burns*. On 1(?) May he wrote to Fanny, 'O there is nothing like fine weather...' (*L II*, p. 56).

Although the nightingale is a common subject for Romantic poetry, Keats probably recalled Coleridge's *To the Nightingale* (1796) and *The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem* (1798), and in his conversation with Coleridge on 11 April 1819 the older man had '... broached a thousand things... Nightingales, - Poetry - on Poetical sensation - Metaphysics - Different genera and

species of Dreams - Nightmares - a dream accompanied by a sense of touch - single and double touch... (L II, pp. 88-9). Keats had also attended Hazlitt's lectures on English poetry, and may have remembered his remarks about the cuckoo - 'The cuckoo, "that wandering voice", that comes and goes with the spring, mocks our ears with one note from youth to age; and the lap-wing, screaming round the traveller's path, repeats for ever the same sad story of Tereu and Philomel' (*Works*, ed. P. P. Howe [1930-34] V, pp. 103-4). The poem also has signs of a recent re-reading of Wordsworth. For Keats's earlier imaginative response to the nightingale's song, see the cancelled readings in *Endymion* I, 494-5n and 665-6n (pp. 589, 591).

Like many of the greatest Romantic odes, Keats's poem explores the nature and limits of artistic creation, setting the suffering of mankind against the immortality of the bird's song. It also takes up the Keatsian concern with the paradoxical association of pleasure and pain. Earlier critics saw the poem as an endorsement of the beauty of art as contrasted with the transience of mortal experience, but later writers have been sharply aware of the tensions within the poem. H. W. Garrod has remarked that the nightingale begins as a particular bird, but is imaginatively transformed into a myth in the course of the poem (*Keats* [1926], pp. 113-14). J. Spens examines the influence of Hazlitt and Wordsworth, in *RES*, III (1952), pp. 234-43, and *Ridley*, pp. 218-31, analyses its relationship with Keats's earlier work. F. R. Leavis gives a valuable discussion of the poem in *Revaluation* (1936), pp. 244-52, and Cleanth Brooks has defined the theme of the poem as the 'following paradox: the world of the imagination offers a release from the painful world of actuality, yet at the same time it renders the world of actuality more painful by contrast' (*Modern Poetry and the Tradition* [1939], p. 31); see also the discussion of the poem in his joint volume with R. P. Warren, *Understanding Poetry* (1960) pp. 426-30. Marshall McLuhan discusses the poem's musical organization in 'Aesthetic Pattern in Keats's Odes', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XII (1943), pp. 167-79, and G. Wilson Knight has a discerning study in *The Starlit Dome* (1941), pp. 258-307. See further, Allen Tate, 'A Reading of Keats in *The Man of Letters in the Modern World* (1955), pp. 193-210, R. H. Fogle, 'Keats's Ode to a Nightingale', *PMLA*, LXVII (1953), pp. 211-22, *Pettei*, pp. 251-81, David Perkins, *The Quest for Permanence* (1959), pp. 244-57, and *Bate* (1963), pp. 500-509. Most general works on Keats contain a discussion of the poem, and K. M. Wilson's *The Nightingale and the Hawk* (1964) gives a basically Jungian interpretation of Keats's work, focusing on the *Ode*. *Title*] Ode to the Nightingale C, *Annals*. The nightingale starts singing in England in mid-April.

1-4 probably echoes Horace's *Epode* XIV, 1-4, *Mollis inertia cur tantum diffuderit imis / obtrivionem sensibus, / pocula Lethaeos ut si ducentia somnos / arente sauce traxerim*... ('... why soft indolence has diffused as great forgetfulness over my inmost senses as if with parched throat I had drained the bowl that brings Lethaeus sleep...').

1 *drowsy numbness pains*] painful numbness falls C (*cancelled*). The words 'Small winged Dryad' which occur upside-down at the bottom of the second page of C probably represent a false start. The relationship between 'drowsy numbness' and creative insight is common in Keats (see J. Holloway, *The Charted Mirror* [1960], pp. 40-52).

2 *hemlock*] a plant which produces a powerful sedative, and from which it is also possible to produce a poison.

4 *past*] hence C (*cancelled*). 'Lethae-wards' recalls that souls waiting in Hades to be reborn drink the waters of Lethe in order to forget their past existence.

7 *light-winged Dryad*] see l. 1n for a variant of this phrase which seems to be Keats's first attempt to begin the poem.

11-13 compare with Keats's remarks in his letter to Fanny on 1(?) May 1819, '... and, please heaven, a little claret-wine out of a cellar a mile deep... a rocky basin to bathe in, a strawberry bed to say your prayers to Flora in... (L II, p. 56). See also 'Hence Burgundy, Claret and Port' 1-2n (p. 614).

11 *vintage* wine.

12 *Cooled a long age*] Cooling an age C (*cancelled*).

14 *Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth*] the festivities at the grape-harvest. Provence was also the home of the medieval troubadours.

15 *warm South* wine from the Mediterranean.

16 *the true, the blushing Hippocrene*] a periphrasis for wine. 'Hippocrene' is 'a fountain of Bœotia, near mount Helicon, sacred to the muses' (*Lemprière*), and hence the fountain of inspiration. Keats may be playing on the difference between 'blushful' (red) wine and the colourlessness of water, but *Balthwin*, p. 49, says, '... the waters of [Hippocrene] were violet-coloured, and are represented as endowed with voice and articulate sound'.

17 *beaded*] clustered C. Altered when Keats decided to use the word at l. 37.

17-18 compare *Endymion* II, 441-4.

19 *leave the world unseen*] unseen by mankind, and (as a secondary meaning) not seeing the world.

20 *away*] not in *Annals* (presumably omitted to avoid a twelve syllable line).

21 *dissolve*] to release from life... to die, depart' (*OED*, which gives the last instance of the usage as 1736), but also with the idea of melting, which was a current meaning (compare *Endymion* I, 98-100). See also *Paradise Lost* VIII, 291.

25-6 *palsy*... *youth* although not capitalized, *Allott* regards these as personifications.

26 *pale, and spectre-thin, and dies* pale and thin, and old and dies C (*cancelled*). Usually seen as a reference to Tom Keats, who died of tuberculosis 1 December 1818. Compare Keats's remark to Fanny on 12 April 1819, '... any place very confined would soon turn me pale and thin... (L II, p. 52), and Wordsworth's *The Excursion* IV, 760, 'While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays...'

27 *sorrow*] grief C (*cancelled*).

- 27-9 compare Keats to Bailey on 21 May 1818, 'I have this morning such a lethargy that I cannot write . . . my hand feels like lead - and yet it is an unpleasant numbness it does not take away the pain of existence. . . .' (L I, p. 287).
- 29-30 compare *Ode on Melancholy* 21-3.
- 31 *to thee* ] with thee C (*cancelled*).
- 32 *Bacchus and his pards* 'pards' are leopards. For Bacchus' rout, see entry under 'Bacchus' in *Dictionary of Classical Names* (p. 725).
- 33 *invisible* invisible (and may also suggest that the flight of 'Poetry' is so high as to make the world invisible).
- 36 *haply* by chance, perhaps. With 'Queen-Moon', compare Coleridge's *To the Nightingale* (1796) 7-8, 'How many wretched Bards address thy name, / And hers, the full orb'd Queen that shines above.' In l. 16 Coleridge refers to the nightingale as 'Minstrel of the Moon'.
- 37 *Clustered* see l. 17n. 'Fays' are fairies.
- 38-50 compare with Coleridge's *The Nightingale. A Conversation Poem* (1798) 4-11, 26, 52-7.
- 40 *Through verdurous* ] Sidelong C (*cancelled*).
- 42 *soft incense* ] blooms C (*cancelled*). For an early use of 'incense' to mean scent, see *Calidore* 155 and n (p. 566).
- 43 *embalmed darkness* the night is full of the scent of flowers. 'Embalmed' also anticipates the concern with death in ll. 51-60.
- 44-50 the 'seasonable month' is May. On 3 May Keats wrote, ' . . . every thing is in delightful forwardness; the violets are not withered, before the peeping of the first rose . . .' (L II, p. 109). Since the violets are 'Fast-fading' in l. 47, I take it that the description refers to mid-May 1819. Hawthorn's white flowers come out in May, and the musk-rose (*rosa moschata*) does not flower until June (and is, therefore, 'mid-May's eldest [most forward] child'). For Keats's liking for the musk-rose, see *To a Friend who Sent me some Roses* 5-6 and 6n (p. 567). The 'eglantine' is the sweet-briar (see *Endymion* IV, 697n).
- 49 *depy* ] sweetest C, *Annals*.
- 51 *Darling* in the dark (compare 'darling way' in *The Eve of St Agnes* 355). Compare *Paradise Lost* III, 37-40, 'Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move / Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird / Sings darbling, and in shadowy covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal Note. . . .'
- 52 *half in love* only one aspect of Keats's feelings are involved. In the next stanza he revolts against the idea of death.
- 54 *quiet* ] painless C.
- 55 *rich to die* compare 'some rich anger', *Ode on Melancholy* 18.
- 56 *To cease upon the midnight* compare 'Why did I laugh tonight? . . .' 11.
- 57 *forth* ] thus C, *Annals*.
- 59 *wouldst* ] would C.
- 60 *To thy high requiem become a sod* Keats first wrote 'For' instead of 'To', and his first attempt at the line was 'But requiem'd' . . . (C). The poem will

- become part of the earth through his death, while the nightingale's continuing song is transformed into a mass for the dead.
- 61 *immortal Bird* immortal because its song is unaltered from age to age. The line has been attacked as nonsense, most notably by Robert Bridges (*The Poems of John Keats*, ed G. Thorn-Drury [1896], p. lxiv).
- 62 compare Wordsworth, *The Excursion* IV, 761-2, 'And countless generations of mankind / Depart; and leave no vestige where they trod . . .' See l. 26n for an echo of Wordsworth's preceding line.
- 64 *clown* countryman, peasant.
- 66-7 *sad heart of Ruth* . . . *alien corn* Ruth, a Moabitess, accompanied her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem. There, in an alien country, she became a gleaner in the fields of Boaz (Ruth ii 1-3).
- 69 *magic casements* ] wide casements C (*cancelled*). Compare with 'The windows as if latched by fays and elves', *To J. H. Reynolds, Esq.* 50, and the references to windows in Keats's letters - 'I should like the window to open onto the Lake of Geneva . . .' (L II, p. 46; see also L I, p. 403).
- 70 *perilous* ] keelless [?] or ruthless [?] C (*cancelled*). The cancelled word is illegible. See further, *Ridley*, pp. 229-30, N. Ford, *KSJ*, I (1952), pp. 11-12, and *Gittings* (1970), pp. 40-41, 67.
- 70, 71 *forlorn* 'in the first instance, "forlorn" is being used primarily in its archaic sense of "utterly lost". The fairy lands are those of a past which is remote and far away. But the meaning of "forlorn" is definitely shifted as the poet repeats the word . . . its meaning "pitiable; left desolate" . . . describes the poet's own state' (Cleath Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* [1939], p. 31).
- 71-2 *bell* . . . toll the image of a church-bell tolling for a funeral continues the religious imagery of 'high requiem' (l. 60) and is continued by 'plaintive anthem' in l. 75.
- 72 *to my sole self* ] unto myself C. 'Sole' means solitary, lonely, with probably some suggestion of the meaning, exclusive of all others.
- 73-4 *the fancy* . . . *deceiving elf* interpreted by *Allott* as meaning 'Fancy is like a will-o'-the-wisp', as in *Endymion* II, 277-9. But 'elf' has several meanings in Keats (see *Endymion* II, 277n, 461n, pp. 596, 597), and here is feminine in gender and means 'faery'. In 1819 the word is usually connected in Keats's mind with the ambiguously attractive or frightening, as in the 'elfin-storm from faery land, / Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed' (*The Eve of St Agnes* 343-4), or the 'elfin grove' of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* 29. Larnia is described as being like 'some penanced lady elf' (see *Lamia* I, 55 and n, p. 692), and as having 'elfin blood' (l. 147). The 'meddling elf' of *On Fame* II ('How favored is the man . . .') 7 is, however, an instance of Keats using the traditional meaning, a mischievous and diminutive spirit. Keats's phrasing has been sharply attacked by Robert Bridges in *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. G. Thorn-Drury (1896), p. lxiv, and by Kingsley Amis in 'The Curious Elf, A Note on Rhyme in Keats', *Essays in Criticism*, I (1951), p. 101, who comments, in a discussion of Keats's 'weakness in handling rhyme', 'After the climax of the preceding stanza, and the vigour of the first two lines of this one,

the elf's appearance here is doubly unwelcome . . . it [has] nothing to add in precision, it even hinders the reader from grasping how "the fancy" appears in the poet's imagination.

74 *famed* ] *above* fam'd *W2* has feigned J.H.R. *C* could be read either as fam'd or fam'd. (See *Jones*, pp. 165-8, for an interesting discussion of Reynolds's 'feigned'.)

75 *plaintive anthem* see l. 71-2n.

77-8 *buried deep* ] *In the next valley-glades* compare with Keats's description of Ambleside water-fall, . . . it is buried in trees, in the bottom of the valley . . . (L I, p. 300).

79 *vision, or a* ] *vision real or C; vision?* or a *Annals*. Compare *Ode to Psyche* 5-6. With the phrase 'waking dream' compare Wordsworth, *Yarrow Visited* (1814), 3, 'a waking dream', *Immortality Ode* (1807) 56-7, 'Whether is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?', *The Excursion* (1814) II, 833, 'By waking sense or by the dreaming soul'; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* III, 5, 123-4, 'Hum! ha! Is this a vision? Is this a dream? Do I sleep?'; Hazlitt, 'On Chaucer and Spenser' (1818), 'Spenser was the poet of our waking dreams . . . lulling the senses into a deep oblivion of the jarring noises of the world, from which we have no wish to be ever recalled' (*Works*, ed. P. P. Howe [1930-4] V, p. 44).

80 *Do I wake or sleep?* is reality the ecstatic world of the nightingale's song, or the everyday world he has 'awakened' to?

#### ODE ON MELANCHOLY

Date of composition conjectural, but probably May 1819. The theme is related to that of the *Ode to a Nightingale* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and the echoes of Burton's *Anatomy* also connect it with this period. Published 1820. Keats's draft (referred to as *K*) is reproduced by *Gittings* (1970), pp. 60-63, and the two leaves are now divided between R. H. Taylor of Princeton and the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library. The poem explores the relationship between melancholy and delight, beauty and transience. It has often been regarded as inferior to the preceding odes, and the first stanza thought to suffer from macabre extravagance (see Douglas Bush, *John Keats* [1966], pp. 144-8). For Keats's cancelled first stanza, which dwelt more emphatically on the macabre, see l. 1n. Discussions of the poem's richness and complexity can be found in William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1947 edn), pp. 214-17, *Bate* (1963), pp. 520-24, Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Company* (1961), pp. 403-6, and in Robin Mayhead's commentary in *John Keats* (1967), pp. 58-65.

I *No, no, go not to Lethe* ] a modulation from the cancelled first stanza preserved in *W2* (printed in 1848 with 'shrouds' for 'creeds' in l. 3): 'Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones, / And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast, / Stitch creeds together for a sail, with groans / To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast; / Although your rudder be a dragon's tail / Long severed, yet still hard with agony, / Your cordage large uprootings from the skull / Of

bald Medusa, certes you would fail / To find the Melancholy - whether she / Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull.' Unlike most critics, who find the stanza strained, Harold Bloom comments, 'The "whether" in the ninth line may be read as "even if".' This remarkable and grisly stanza is more than the reverse of an invitation to the voyage. Its irony is palpable; its humour is in the enormous labor of Gothitizing despair which is necessarily in vain, for the mythic beast, Melancholy, cannot thus be confronted. The tone of the stanza changes with the dash in line 9; with it the voice speaking the poem ceases to be ironical . . . By excluding the original first stanza, Keats lost a grim humour that finds only a thin echo at the poem's close. That humour, in juxtaposition to the poem's intensities, would have been parallel to successful clowning in a tragedy' (*The Visionary Company* [1961], pp. 403-4).

2 *Wolf's-bane* ] *Hensbane* ] *K* (*cancelled*). 'Hensbane', like wolf-bane (aconite), is a poisonous plant.

4-5 *nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine* . . . *rosary of yew-berries* Deadly Nightshade is a poisonous plant with bright red berries, and hence is the 'ruby grape' of Proserpine, Queen of the Underworld. The yew-tree also has small red berries which are poisonous.

6 *beetle* death-watch beetle.

6-7 *nor the death-moth be* ] *Your mournful Psyche* the Death's Head moth is a large species of hawk-moth, having marks on the back of the thorax resembling a human skull. As Psyche (the soul) was represented as a moth or butterfly (see *Ode to Psyche* headnotes, p. 667), the sense is ironical - 'do not let the Death's Head moth become the antitype of Psyche ("Your mournful [as opposed to joyous] Psyche").'

8 *sorrow's mysteries*. Melancholy is regarded, throughout the poem, as a Goddess to whom proper observances are due. In the final stanza, Melancholy has a 'shrine' in the 'temple of Delight' with its 'trophies' (see l. 30n). The 'wine' of ll. 1-2, the wreath of ll. 3-4, the 'rosary' of l. 5, and 'sorrow's mysteries' are all associated with the rites of worship, though mixing Christian and pagan aids to devotion.

9 *shade to shade* plays on 'shade' (shadow) and 'shade' (spirit, ghost).

9 *drowsily* ] heavily and sleepily *K* (*cancelled*).

11-14 these lines develop the paradox that though Melancholy produces showers of tears, the tears are, like April showers, the bringer of new and fresh life.

11 *fall* ] come *K* (*cancelled*).

14 *hill* ] hills *K* (*and all transcripts*). The singular in 1820 is possibly a misprint which slipped Keats's attention, but in context its particularity is effective.

15 *glut* . . . 'take one's fill of thinking, gazing, etc., on something' (*OED*). Compare Thomas Carew's *Separation of Lancers* (1639), 13-14, 'Love doth with an hungry eye / Glut on beauty. . .'. Probably also with some suggestion of the sense, 'To gratify to the full (. . . esp. a ferocious or lustful desire)' (*OED*). See further, *On the Sea* 3n (p. 582).

18-20 *Gittings* (1970), p. 79, comments that these lines ' . . . have been accused of masochism, sadism . . . and, what is perhaps worse, of painting a

rather silly and "Cockney" picture of the young poet flirtatiously holding on to his girl-friend's wrists while she struggles to get away. The lines can be compared to *Lamia* II, 73-6. However, *K* has 'Mistress' and the 'She' of l. 21 must refer to Melancholy: as Robin Mayhead observes, 'The "mistress" may thus be regarded as either a "real" woman, a personification of melancholy, or both.' (*John Keats* [1967], p. 64).

21 *She dwells with Beauty* | She lives in Beauty *K*.  
23-6 compare Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* I 2 iii 5, '... in the Calends of January Angerona [identified with Melancholy, II i iii] had her holy day, to whom in the Temple of Voluptia, or Goddess of Pleasure, their Augurs and Bishops did yearly sacrifice' (1813 edn I, p. 141). Compare also Hazlitt's 'On Poetry in General', where he remarks, 'The poetical impression of any subject is that uneasy, exquisite sense of beauty or power that ... strives ... to enshrine itself ... in the highest forms of fancy, and to relieve the aching sense of pleasure by expressing it in the boldest manner' (*Works*, ed. P. P. Howe [1930-34] V, p. 3).

24 compare *Isabella* 103-4, 'Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers, / Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.'

27 *him* | those *K* (*cancelled*).

29 *sadness* | anguish *K*.

30 *cloudy trophies* trophies of victory were displayed in classical temples. Keats could also be thinking of the battle honours displayed in many English churches and cathedrals. Compare also Shakespeare, *Sonnet* xxxi 9-10, 'Thou art the grave where buried love doth live, / Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone. ...'

#### ODE ON INDOLENCE

Probably written late May or early June 1819. Published 1848, which forms the basis of the text with some variants adopted from *W2*. Charles Brown's transcript has the stanzas in a different order (1, 2, 4, 6, 3, 5) but with the stanza numbers altered to correspond with *W2*'s order. *W2*'s order (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) was adopted in 1848, though R. M. Milnes based his text on Brown's transcript. Like *Allott*, the order followed here is that of *W2* and 1848. *G* constructed a fresh order (1, 2, 5, 3, 4, 6), which has no obvious advantages. (*Allott* gives the order in Brown's transcript as 1, 2, 5, 6, 4, 3, but this seems to be a misunderstanding of *Garrard*'s notes in *G* and *OSA*.)

The date of the poem's composition is suggested by Keats's letter of 9 June to Sarah Jeffrey: 'I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing; both from the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abatement of my own love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying Pet-lamb [compare II, 53-4]. ... You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an ode to Indolence' (*L II*, p. 116). A letter from George on 12 May had forced Keats to take stock of his situation, and he thought for a while of looking for a post as surgeon on a ship. Poetry was bringing neither money nor fame, and financial security was essential before he could marry Fanny

Brawne. On 31 May he wrote, 'Yes, I would rather conquer my indolence and strain my neck [ves at some grand Poem - than be in a dunderheaded indianian [a ship of the East Indian Company]' (*L II*, p. 113). The *Ode on Indolence* is the only ode concerned with the poet himself, rather than something exterior, and the figures on the urn, Fame, Love and Poesy, which are rejected in favour of Indolence, are a direct reflection of his personal crisis. Keats had been sorting out his affairs, and apparently going over his papers. He came across a passage written on 19 March, which provided the basis of the *Ode* - 'In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of excitement and pain no unbearable frown. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me: they seem rather like three figures on a greek vase - a Man and two women - whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disfigurement. This is the only happiness; and is a rare instance of advantage in the body overpowering the Mind' (*L II*, pp. 78-9). The *Ode* rehandles and echoes ideas and lines used earlier in the *Ode to Psyche*, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the *Ode to a Nightingale*, and the two sonnets *On Fame* (see notes below). For discussions of the *Ode*, generally considered markedly inferior to the major odes, see *Gittings* (1954), pp. 143-6, Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Company* (1961), pp. 410-11, and *Bate* (1963), pp. 527-30.

*Motto* 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin', Matthew vi 28.

9 *betide* happen to, befall (poeticism).

10 *Phidias* Phidias (c. 490-c. 448 B.C.), sculptor of the Periclean age, responsible, among many other works, for the Elgin Marbles.

12 *masque* | mask 1848, *Garrard* (*OSA*).

20 compare Keats's comment on 17 March, 'I do not know what I did on Monday - nothing - nothing - nothing - nothing - I wish this was any thing extraordinary' (*L II*, p. 77).

21-2 possibly echoes the witches' prophecy in *Macbeth* IV. i. Further, see I. 349.

33 *Ambition* - | *W2*, *G*, *Allott*: Ambition! 1848.

33-4 compare with *On Fame* (I) and (II).

34 *man's little heart's short fever-fit* echoes *Macbeth* III. 2. 23, 'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well. ... This, together with the possible echo in II. 21-2 above, may indicate that Keats was thinking of Ambition, Love and Poesy as his equivalent of the three witches who tempt Macbeth to damnation. The line also recalls *Ode to a Nightingale* 23-4.

38 *annoy* pain, harm (Spenser).

41 *A third time* | *W2*, *G*, *Allott*: And once more 1848. The alteration avoids the repetition of the opening words of l. 21 above. But this line, with its 'alas! wherefore?', refers to something that has already happened.

43-6 compare *Ode on Melancholy* 12-14.

47-8 compare *Ode to Psyche* 66-7.

52 compare *Ode to Psyche* 15.