

## To Keats

I have tried many times to encapsulate what I feel about Keats. His life, his letters, his poems are so unconsciously rich with the English idiom that he walks out of them like a friend, a friend to dream of. He is so near to being the perfect poet because all that he wrote seems to imply greater things to come. People who I admire like Peter Medawar have criticised his "beauty truth, truth beauty" etc but he was still very young and had already surpassed for his age everybody. In the end it is something in his personality which transcends life and death and invokes a sympathy which I find very difficult to define but is immensely profound. In his letters more than the poems he gives us that quality and his engagement with life fills us with his moving spirit.

"My hand is like a man of fifty"  
Facing your being with no more revels  
Astride your unicorn-your imagination  
That erstwhile voice strikes across the years  
In answer to our being.

Tough and strong but still it came like ice  
Seeing you gives us no more fear  
But still I miss the starry height  
To join with Severn in your lonely fight  
And be that allegory in a Roman waste.

And Brown and Dilke, George and Rice  
Haydon, Taylor and Baily  
How great their merit for your genius  
Or signing off like Reynolds epitaph  
"Friend of John Keats"

The English way in spite of modern harms  
Survives, and they and you and us  
"Must taste the sadness of her might"  
Yet happy are we since you have gone  
To follow that dear throng  
"And be among her cloudy trophies hung"