

**Richard Marggraf Turley, ed., *Keats's Places*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. xvi + 305. £99.99. ISBN 9783319922423.**

Where many of the canonical Romantics are frequently read in accordance with theories of 'place' – William Wordsworth's name is inseparable from the Lakes, for instance – John Keats has not until now received such treatment. The title of this new collection of essays, *Keats's Places*, implies an emphasis on particulars rather than abstract theories, and Richard Marggraf Turley affirms such an emphasis in his introduction: *Keats's Places* pits the reality of place against any notion of Keats's poetry as escapist fantasy, or what Marggraf Turley calls 'literary confections' or 'ideological blind spots' (1). This matters, because Keats is so often treated as fantasist or pure aesthete; in focusing on the reality of place, *Keats's Places* is also making a claim about Keats's real-worldliness. Marggraf Turley himself is interested in Keats and 'literary geography' or 'geocriticism', and his contribution here reflects that. 'Keats Underway' reconstructs the poet's 1817 journey by coach from London to Southampton, arguing for an act of 'counter mapping' in Keats's recollections of the journey that inform the poetic landscapes of the 1818 epic *Endymion*. That reconstructive methodology is also taken up by Hrileena Ghosh, who highlights the importance of Margate as a location for Keats, and makes a speculative claim about how Keats may have shored up in Margate – via one Joshua Waddington, an associate of Leigh Hunt's and a student, with Keats, at Guy's Hospital. Elsewhere, very different methods are taken up in the pursuit of Keatsian journeys. Heidi Thomson argues that Keats's take on the 'Meg Merrilies' character was an assemblage of his experiences during his Scottish tour, and figures as an 'Amazonian' personification of landscape and local myth that lent itself to the recurrent 'mature, experienced women' (136) who would populate his later epics. Meiko O'Halloran and Alexandra Paterson also take up that walking tour. For O'Halloran, it was on that journey that Keats 'began to look both physically and metaphorically towards the landscape of the epic' (21); likewise, for Paterson, the rugged Scottish landscape was a useful counterpoint to the polished marbles Keats saw in the British Museum, offering the poet a glimpse of 'the geological origin of sculptures' (182).

Recent discussion of place in literary criticism has been inspired in no small part by Fiona Stafford's 2010 book *Local Attachments*, and Stafford's contribution here, 'Keats, Shoots and Leaves', is similarly exemplary, tracing Keats's knowledge of botany into his evolving poetic images. Hampstead Heath is not just a site for poetic reverie or the home of Leigh Hunt, but it is also the place where London's young doctors in the early nineteenth century set about gathering samples of the local flora. Stafford's chapter ultimately reads poems including the early 'I Stood Tip-Toe Upon a Little Hill' in a new light – as representatives of landscapes overladen with real, taxonomically accurate flowers that keep the poet's feet, even if only by the tips of his toes, grounded in reality.

Despite Marggraf Turley's stated intentions, it is not altogether clear if *Keats's Places* adumbrates anything like a refined methodology concerning place, 'geocritical' or otherwise. It feels telling that some of the most engaging material in the volume is not really concerned with place at all. Grant F. Scott is more interested in Keats's reception, and his essay, 'Keats's American Ode', offers a cogent and incisive history of his twentieth-century readers, including the turn in the 1980s from the apolitical formalism of Helen Vendler to the 'relentless historicism' that followed Marjorie Levinson's *Keats's Life of Allegory* (207). And Michael O'Neill is interested only in 'textual spaces', and of the 'place' within literary history that Keats and Shelley both sought (O'Halloran similarly invokes the 'place for posterity' of Keats's works (159)). His essay offers a sensitive reading of Keats and Shelley's exchange of letters in 1820, with reflections on the writerly dynamic that, O'Neill suggests, helped each poet to form his own enduring identity in response to the other's commentaries. Through attention to poetry and prose alike, O'Neill shows how 'Shelleyan metaphysics and Keatsian physics reach out to

their opposite' (99) – how the very groundedness of Keats's poetry, discovered elsewhere in this volume in his flowers, coach journeys, medical notebooks, and letters from Scotland, is precisely what allows him to reach towards the idealist flights for which he is so well known. There's no single methodology nor critical approach to 'place' on display here, yet through its variety of perspectives *Keats's Places* does offer a counterpoint to the view that the central impulse of Keats's poetry was to 'fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget' historical circumstance, political reality, or social affairs. Taken as a whole, the essays in this ranging and enlightening volume remind us that, however freely his imagination roamed, Keats remained, always, locally attached, and anchored in the living and breathing reality of the world in which he lived.

*Chris Townsend*  
*Christ's College, University of Cambridge*