

# THE KEATS – SHELLEY REVIEW



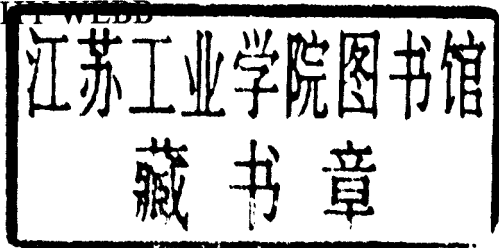
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NUMBER THREE

# KEATS – SHELLEY REVIEW

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TIMOTHY WEBB



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1988

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*The Chairman's Report: 1 September 1987 – 31 August 1988*

DURING THE year we have been saddened to learn of the deaths of Mr Leslie Williams, who was one of the earliest treasurers of the Association and a member for many years, and also of Dr D. M. H. Bickmore and Mrs Robert Darley, who were long-standing members.

We are pleased to welcome two new members to our London Committee: Lord Bridges, who has just retired as our Ambassador in Rome and who was Co-President with the American Ambassador of our Rome Committee, and Mr Roderick Cavaliero, who was a former member of the Rome Committee and British Council Representative in Rome.

Sadly Mrs Tina Gee has resigned as Honorary Secretary due to increased pressure of work at Keats House, Hampstead where she is Curator. She has been Honorary Secretary since 1965 and has done a great amount of hard work both for the Association and for the Friends and we are all much indebted to her. We are very pleased that she is able to continue on our committee and give us the benefit of her long experience. Mrs Diana Scott-Kilvert has very kindly become our Hon. Secretary for the current year and we are most grateful for her help.

The 1988 Annual Lecture for Friends was given by Dr Jonathan Bate at Keats House, Hampstead on 28 September and was entitled 'The Two Hyperions and the Problem of Milton'.

The International Meeting was held in Rome on 12 October 1987 and was attended by the President, Lord De L'Isle, the Chairman, Lady Birkenhead, and other members of the Committee. There was a long discussion about the necessity and the possibility of repairing the roof and fabric of the House. Various ways of raising the large sum of money needed were considered. The Co-President of the Rome Committee, the British Ambassador and Lady Bridges kindly entertained members of the British and Rome Committees to luncheon at the British Embassy on the following day.

Sir Joseph Cheyne, Curator of the House in Rome, has written a report for this issue of the *Review* telling of the activities that have taken place there during the year.

Our main concern at the moment is the repairs to the roof and fabric of the House. We have at last obtained the necessary permits and work has been started. We have formed an Appeal Committee chaired by Lord De L'Isle, and to be run by Mr Christopher Mann, to help us obtain the considerable sum needed. This will be launched publicly in the autumn.

Over the years our Friends and Members in England, America and Italy have been very generous in helping us to maintain the House in Rome and we hope very

much that they will again give us their support which has meant so much to us in the past.

*Sheila Birkenhead*

If consolidation is news, the Memorial House has much to report. Admissions and sales in 1987-88 returned almost to the levels of 1985-86 after the sharp falls in 1986-87 due to the fall-off in visitors from the USA. This recovery was due largely to a welcome increase in the numbers of Italians visiting the House and an increased number of Italian school-groups – over 100 in the academic year, which means, if one subtracts holidays and week-ends, roughly a group a day. Added to which, the Memorial House has again been able to set aside modest reserves during the year.

This improvement in our finances has also enabled us to hold a second and most successful Conference at the British School at Rome from 15-17 April on 'The Romantics as Expatriates: A Study in Conflict', to which I referred in the last *Review*. The Conference was attended by Italian, American and British speakers and examined the problems of conflict and expatriation as they affected not only the British Romantics but the Italian and American Romantics as well. The Conference was organized wholly by the Memorial House in conjunction with the British Council (who paid the fares from the UK for three speakers), the British School at Rome, and the Universities of Rome and Bologna.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Conference was the large number of students and young people who attended: out of 175 people who enrolled 103 were students. Many of the speakers were much impressed by the assiduity with which the students attended the various sessions. This is yet another confirmation of the seriousness of the Romantic revival, particularly in Italy; and a splendid augury for the future. It is also proof of the growing involvement of the Memorial in Italian academic life. Indeed, we are already looking forward with Bologna University to a Conference to be held – we hope again at the British School at Rome – in late September or early October 1989, on 'The French Revolution and Romantic Thought' to coincide with the bicentenary of the fall of the Bastille. And also – of course – to the Shelley bicentenary in 1992.

Another interesting development is the involvement of the Memorial House in an important Byron exhibition being organized by the Biblioteca Classense of Ravenna for the Byron bicentenary which will be open from 6 August to 31 October. The House has lent a number of prints and books and I have contributed an article to the catalogue. The Committee has also lent the Ezekiel bust of Shelley to an Exhibition organized by a Committee of the Province of Brescia on Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Finally, the plans for the work of restoration of the House itself have at last been approved and estimates received. The work in the porter's flat will begin on 6 July 1988, and on the roof and facade in September. It is hoped that all will be finished by

the beginning of 1989. We are still not sure what colour we shall be able to paint the House: the decision rests with the government's Fine Arts Department. We can only hope – although we can by no means count on this – that we shall end up with a renewed and beautiful 'Casina Rossa', the 'Little Red House', the name by which the Memorial has been known for so many years.

*Sir Joseph Cheyne, Bart., O.B.E.*  
(Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House)

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## A LAMENTABLE LAY: KEATS AND THE MAKING OF CHARLES BROWN'S SPENSER VOLUMES

by Greg Kucich

SPENSER MADE Keats a poet and presided formatively over his creative maturation. Ever since Charles Cowden Clarke recounted the legendary scene of an adolescent Keats 'ramping' through *The Faerie Queene*, inspired therein to shape his own poetic universe, Keats's readers have been much intrigued by his rich engagement with Spenser.<sup>1</sup> The concrete evidence of his direct response, however, is limited. Beyond several references to Spenser in scattered poems and letters, Keats's only extensive commentary on Spenser available to modern scholars has been his one annotated volume of John Hughes's six-volume 1715 edition of Spenser's works. Although this volume (hereafter cited as *Hughes*) contains little marginalia, its underlinings and marginal strokes yield an invaluable record of Keats's favourite passages in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*. Amy Lowell transcribed these markings in her biography of Keats, and following scholars have relied upon her transcription as one of their most important sources for measuring Keats's reaction to Spenser.<sup>2</sup> Its accuracy has been deemed so consequential as to necessitate a recent

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, *The Keats Circle*, edited by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965), II, 148. Charles Brown also attributed Keats's poetic birth to Spenser's captivating influence (*Life of Keats* (1937), p. 42). Richard Monckton Milnes repeated these accounts in his landmark 1848 biography of Keats and went on to emphasize Spenser's muse as the 'great impulse of [Keats's] . . . poetic life' (*The Life and Letters of John Keats* (New York, 1848), p. 9). Several sustained essays, though obsolescent and still in need of a major revision, have since been devoted to the subject. See William Read, *Keats and Spenser* (Heidelberg, 1897); Traugott Bohme, *Spenser's literarisches Nachleben bis zu Shelley* (Berlin, 1911); M. M. Bhattachereje, *Keats and Spenser* (Calcutta, 1944); Karel Stepanik, 'The Problem of Spenserian Inspiration in Keats's Poetry', *Brno Studies in English*, 2 (1960), 5-74; Joan Grundy, 'Keats and the Elizabethans', in *John Keats: A Reassessment*, edited by Kenneth Muir (Liverpool, 1969), pp. 1-19. All of the major twentieth-century biographies of Keats, especially the standard ones by W. J. Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963), and Robert Gittings, *John Keats* (1968), treat Spenser's influence extensively. And Miriam Allott's annotated edition of Keats's poetry, *Keats: The Complete Poems* (1970), makes numerous references to his Spenserian sources. In one of the most recent major studies of Keats's later poetry, *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), Helen Vendler makes a sustained case for Spenser as one of the principal muses of Keats's mature poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Lowell, *John Keats*, 2 vols (Boston, 1925), II, 545-78. Lowell cited what she thought to be a concentration on luxurious passages in these markings as evidence for Keats's chief interest in Spenserian enchantment - 'descriptions of colours . . . [and] pictures appealing directly to one or more of the senses' (I, 100). Her transcription has provided the basis for many similar characterizations of his response to Spenser. Thus Aileen Ward writes: 'The passages [Keats] . . . marked in his copy of *The Faerie Queene* show a love of precisely observed colour and light and sound and movement, and an image compressed into a single explosive epithet filled him with almost physical delight' (*John Keats* (New York, 1963), p. 29).

correction of its errors.<sup>3</sup> This attention carries with it an obvious regret over the lost five volumes of the Hughes text, which Keats probably marked, and the presumably lost edition of Spenser that he was known to have scored for Fanny Brawne near the end of his life. Access to any of these missing books would provide a great boost to our knowledge of the Keats/Spenser dynamic.

It now appears that portions of the Spenser marked by Keats for Fanny Brawne may have been resting unnoticed for the last thirty years at the Keats House Library in Hampstead. The evidence I will present suggests that several heavily scored Spenser volumes at Keats House, which were once owned by Charles Brown, may be among the ones Keats marked for Fanny Brawne. If we make such an assumption on the basis of this evidence, then we can find in Brown's volumes (hereafter cited as *Brown*) several important new revelations about Keats's idea of Spenser, his habits of reading, and his state of mind in the last months of his life.<sup>4</sup>

# I

Although Keats probably read Spenser's poetry on a regular basis throughout most of his adult life, we can only be certain that he marked passages from it at least two distinct times – once in *Hughes* as he began work on *Endymion* in the spring of 1817 and once in an unknown edition as he noted passages for Fanny Brawne in 1820.<sup>5</sup> Because the extant volume of *Hughes* is very heavily scored, it is likely that

<sup>3</sup> Beth Lau, 'Further Corrections to Amy Lowell's Transcriptions of Keats's Marginalia', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 35 (1986), 30-38.

<sup>4</sup> *Brown* comprises volumes 3-6 of the eight-volume Spenser collection in John Bell's *British Poets* (1778). These four volumes are rebound in two-volume sets, numbered '2' and '3'. In 1955 they were sent to Keats House from New Zealand, where Brown evidently took them when he emigrated, by Mrs Mona Martha Osborne, Brown's grand-daughter. The whereabouts of volumes 1-2, 7-8 of Bell's edition, or '1' and '4' of the rebound set, are unknown.

Because the markings in *Brown* are quite extensive, a full transcription of them here is impractical. I will discuss, however, the most significant patterns among them. Permission to reproduce material from *Hughes* and *Brown* has been granted by the Harvard University Library, where *Hughes* is located, and the Keats House Library. I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Christina M. Gee, Curator of Keats House. And my special thanks go out to Keats House staff members Roberta Davis and Judith Knight, without whose lively encouragement and knowledgeable assistance this study could not have been completed.

<sup>5</sup> Keats took a Spenser edition with him to the Isle of Wight, where he began work on *Endymion* in the spring of 1817. On 18 April he wrote to John Hamilton Reynolds about the following passage on ambition, which he had just discovered in the Spenser:

"The noble Heart that harbors vertuous thought,  
And is with Child of glorious great intent,  
Can never rest, until it forth have brought  
Th'eternal Brood of Glory excellent –"

(*The Letters of John Keats*, edited by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), I, 134). (hereafter, *Letters*).

Keats used a clean edition when marking Spenser for Fanny in 1820. Little is known about the identity of this edition or its fate after Keats's death. And what little evidence exists has been significantly distorted. Much more information is available concerning the specific events of Keats's life at the time of his second Spenser markings. Since details of these events and an accurate record of the missing Spenser edition are vital to an understanding of his possible hand in *Brown*, a brief history of both contexts must follow.

Keats was entering the direst crisis of his life when he began marking Spenser for Fanny in 1820. A severe lung haemorrhage had recently made him leave his own residence in Kentish Town to live as an invalid at Leigh Hunt's nearby house. Despite Hunt's care and affection, Keats was miserable. His illness had taken on all the definite signs of a fatal consumption, which struck him with the imminent prospect of a bitter abbreviation to his creative promise, his love for Fanny Brawne, his very existence. His closest friend and greatest mainstay in perilous times, Charles Brown, was unreachable on a hiking tour of Scotland. Oppressed by such burdens of mind and body, Keats looked to Spenser, his old favourite, for comfort and began marking 'beautiful passages' for Fanny. He sent her this note early in July, probably on the 4th:

For this Week past I have been employed in marking the most beautiful passages in Spenser, intending it for you, and comforting myself in being somewhat occupied to give you however small a pleasure. It has lightened my time very much. I am much better. God bless you. (Letters, II, 302)

The fortunes of this edition after Keats marked it for Fanny make up an elaborate puzzle that has fostered two rather large scholarly misconceptions. We know that Fanny had it in her possession in 1823, when she lent it to Keats's sister.<sup>6</sup> Her biographer claims, without providing any substantiation, that she took it with her

Because the punctuation and spelling of this quotation agree with *Hughes*, where the passage is also marked, Keats's active annotation of *Hughes* in 1817 seems evident. Lowell guesses, probably correctly, that he was also marking *Hughes* sometime between 1814 and 1816 (*John Keats*, I, 100). He told Fanny Brawne in July of 1820 that he was marking Spenser's poetry for her (*Letters*, II, 302), but which edition he used has never been ascertained. He did own another edition of Spenser's works, *The Works of that Famous English Poet, Mr. Edmond Spenser* (1679), given to him in 1818 by Joseph Severn. This volume, according to Frank Owings, bears no markings other than Keats's inscription of his name on the title page (*The Keats Library* (1978), p. 59).

<sup>6</sup> *Letters of Fanny Brawne to Fanny Keats*, edited by Frank Edgcumbe (New York, 1937), p. 84.

during her long residence in Europe, from 1833 to 1859.<sup>7</sup> In 1872, however, a correspondent in *The Athenaeum*, probably Sir Charles Dilke, reported that Fanny's descendants still owned Keats's Shakespeare but could not locate his Spenser.<sup>8</sup> It has been assumed that the Spenser was lost sometime between 1823 and 1872, probably during Fanny's travels in Germany. H. B. Forman stated this conjecture as fact in 1901, and subsequent commentators have repeated his claim.<sup>9</sup> Yet there is no definite proof that the edition was lost, or that it was even carried to Europe by Fanny. There are even some indications that it may have been in England with Brown, as an edition he had always owned, while Fanny was travelling on the Continent.<sup>10</sup> We can only know for certain, however, that Fanny's descendants were unsure of its location in 1872.

The other long-standing misconception about the 'lost' Spenser entails its most significant manuscript notation – Keats's Spenserian stanza on Artegall's encounter with the Giant, thought to be written in Keats's own hand. According to Brown,

<sup>7</sup> Joanna Richardson, *Fanny Brawne* (1952), p. 131. Richardson claims that Fanny showed the Spenser to Thomas Medwin in Germany sometime around 1840. In his biography of Shelley, Medwin discusses Keats's Shakespeare, which Fanny showed to him (*The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by H. B. Forman (1913), pp. 304-5). Medwin makes no reference, however, to Keats's Spenser, nor does Fanny in any of her published accounts about her dealings with Medwin.

<sup>8</sup> See Richardson, *Fanny Brawne*, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> H. B. Forman, *The Complete Works of John Keats*, 5 vols (Glasgow 1900-01), V, 174. See also M. B. Forman, *The Letters of John Keats* (1947), p. 489; H. W. Garrod, *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (1956), p. 469; Rollins, *Letters*, II, 302; Allott, *Keats: The Complete Poems*, p. 742; Jack Stillinger, *The Poems of John Keats* (1978), p. 681.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Monckton Milnes's knowledge about Keats's Spenser suggests that it may have been with Brown in the late 1840s while Fanny was abroad. Milnes knew enough about the text while preparing his 1848 biography of Keats to describe the details of a manuscript poem in it – Keats's Spenserian stanza on the encounter in *The Faerie Queene* between Artegall and the Giant (*Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, p. 186). These details were not mentioned in Brown's 1839 publication of the poem. Garrod thinks, therefore, that Milnes must have seen the text (*The Poetical Works of John Keats*, p. 649). Although this point cannot be proven, it must be considered as a possibility. It is unlikely that Fanny could have shown the text to Milnes or told him about it, despite Richardson's claim to the contrary (*Fanny Brawne*, p. 134), for there is no record of any contact between them. But Milnes and Brown did correspond regularly in 1840-41 as Brown prepared to send Milnes most of his Keats materials before emigrating to New Zealand. If Milnes did see Keats's Spenser, he probably had it from Brown. This would mean that Fanny passed the Spenser on to Brown sometime between 1823, when she lent it to Fanny Keats, and 1841. Although Brown lived in Italy from 1821 to 1835 and Fanny resided in Germany from 1833 to 1859, the two of them corresponded (see Joanna Richardson, *The Everlasting Spell* (1963), p. 53), overlapped more than once on return visits to England, and could certainly have found opportunity for a transfer of the Spenser. There could be only one likely reason for such a transfer to take place – Brown's ownership of the text in question. Another consideration, if we pursue the implications of Keats's possible role in Brown, is that Fanny and Brown, both holding a claim to the Spenser edition, could have divided the set – Fanny taking volumes '1' and '4' to Germany, perhaps misplacing them, and Brown keeping '2' and '3'.

this was Keats's last composition.<sup>11</sup> Brown never said anything publicly about its manuscript version. But to ensure the poem's preservation, he transcribed it in his own Spenser at the end of its related episode in Book Five, Canto Two of *The Faerie Queene*. He dated the transcription '1820' and eventually published the poem in the 4 July 1839 number of the *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal*. The first public statement about its manuscript status in a Spenser volume came with Milnes's biography of 1848. Introducing the poem, Milnes wrote: 'The copy of "Spenser" which Keats had in daily use contains the following stanza, inserted at the close of Canto ii. Book v.'<sup>12</sup> Although we cannot be sure whether Milnes actually saw this manuscript or heard about it from someone else, it is certain that he did not specify who 'inserted' the stanza. His choice of words – a 'copy of Spenser' used by Keats that 'contains' an 'inserted' stanza, instead of 'Keats's book in which he wrote the stanza' – may even be construed to imply a transcription by someone other than Keats in a volume that Keats did not own. Yet twentieth-century editors have assumed the inserted stanza to have been written by Keats in one edition of Spenser, now lost, and then transcribed by Brown in the same section of his own Spenser.<sup>13</sup> There is no solid evidence for this scenario, only Milnes's imprecise statement. Several more substantial factors, however, suggest the possibility of a different course of events, in which Brown wrote out, or 'inserted', the stanza in the same edition that Keats was regularly using, Brown's own.

Keats's reading and writing habits during his experience with Spenser in 1820 point toward this situation in several different ways. Most Keats scholars limit his 1820 readings of Spenser and his composition of the Artegall stanza to early June. Brown later claimed, however, that Keats frequently read Spenser 'to wile away the hours of sickness' and wrote the Artegall stanza 'on one of those occasions.'<sup>14</sup> For Brown to recall these 'occasions', they must have taken place during the early part of 1820, before he left for Scotland in May never to see Keats again. Brown's recollection that 'one of these occasions' was the date of Keats's last poem would also seem to put the composition of the Artegall stanza before May of 1820.<sup>15</sup> This earlier date for Keats's Spenserian activity is further supported by his periodic work

<sup>11</sup> See *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats*, edited by H. B. Forman, 8 vols (New York, 1939), IV, 232-33.

<sup>12</sup> *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, p. 186.

<sup>13</sup> H. B. Forman, *Poetical Works*, IV, 232-33; Garrod, *Poetical Works*, p. 469; Gittings, *John Keats*, pp. 402-3; Allott, *Keats: The Complete Poems*, p. 742; Stillinger, *The Poems of John Keats*, p. 681.

<sup>14</sup> See H. B. Forman, *Poetical Works*, IV, 232.

<sup>15</sup> Brown also seemed positive that Keats could not have written any verse after May of 1820. For he was convinced by the summer of that year, on the authority of Keats's own letters (*Letters*, II, 289-90, 298-99, 320-21), that deteriorating health had made any further composition impossible since their separation in May.

that winter on the Spenserian stanzas of *The Cap and Bells*, a task that would have been likely to encourage his reading of Spenser. Brown was transcribing these stanzas as Keats wrote them, and it appears from his handwritten version of the Artegall stanza that he transcribed it around the same time. For he gave one variant reading in the transcription, an act that implies either his inability to decipher Keats's manuscript, variant readings in the manuscript or, more probably, Keats's own wish for a change – a wish, of course, that only could have been expressed to Brown before May of 1820.<sup>16</sup> Such evidence argues for Keats's immersion in Spenserian materials several months before the Brawne markings. It also suggests that *Brown* was very much before him during this activity.

The timing is significant because Keats, then living at Wentworth Place with Brown, was regularly reading and marking Brown's books during the same general period – his copy of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, given to Keats in 1819, and his copy of Ben Jonson's works, mentioned by Keats in a letter of February, 1820.<sup>17</sup> There are several indications that Keats may have similarly used *Brown* at this time.

There is no record, for instance, of his access to any other Spenser volumes during the same period. His 1679 Spenser, the gift from Severn, seems to have been misplaced or given away by now – for Brown omitted it from the catalogue he made of books in Keats's possession in 1820.<sup>18</sup> And all but the first volume of the Hughes edition, according to Brown's catalogue, had gone the same route by 1820. This initial volume ends with the conclusion of Book One of *The Faerie Queene*. The marked volumes of *Brown* now at Keats House commence with Book Two, Canto Ten of *The Faerie Queene* – the Bower of Bliss, one of Keats's favourite Spenserian episodes – and they end with the last book of Spenser's epic. This configuration suggests Keats's possible reliance on them, in lieu of his missing Hughes volumes, for his reading and marking of *The Faerie Queene* throughout 1820. Such an implication is strengthened by one final clue, which indicates the absence of any Spenser but the one Hughes volume from Keats's personal library in 1820. When

<sup>16</sup> In line eight of the stanza, Brown's transcription shows 'grim' interleaved above the undeleted 'slim'. Brown's 1939 text and all following editions prefer the more appropriate epithet 'grim'. Changes in Brown's many transcriptions of Keats's draft manuscripts often imply Keats's authority. On several occasions, for instance, Keats actually corrected Brown's transcriptions (see Stillinger, *The Poems of John Keats*, pp. 596, 610). Brown's own corrections of Keats's original drafts, moreover, are frequently sustained in the publications that Keats oversaw. And his corrections of drafts published after Keats's death have been acknowledged on some occasions to reflect Keats's probable wishes for revision (see Stillinger, *The Poems of John Keats*, p. 673). His change in the Artegall stanza may therefore be considered an improvement possibly made or sanctioned by Keats.

<sup>17</sup> See H. B. Forman, *Poetical Works*, V, 306-7, and *Letters*, II, 262.

<sup>18</sup> *The Keats Circle*, I, 253-60.

cataloguing the works that Keats owned in 1820, Brown listed books annotated by Keats and given to Fanny Brawne that were still in her possession – his Dante volumes, for instance.<sup>19</sup> Brown did not mention the marked Spenser edition that Fanny came to possess. This omission would suggest that by 1820 Keats did not own, or at least did not have in his personal library, any Spenser volumes besides *Hughes*. When coupled with the assembled evidence concerning Keats, Brown, and Spenser in 1820, it also points toward the definite possibility of Keats's recourse to *Brown* throughout that year.<sup>20</sup>

The strongest evidence for this scenario, however, rests in the actual markings of *Brown* – their style, their relation to Spenserian passages that Keats was known to esteem, and the provocative commentary they seem to give on Keats's thoughts about his own abbreviated life and art.

## II

The style of these markings is foreign to Brown's habits of annotation. All four of the volumes that comprise *Brown* are heavily scored in pen with underlinings and marginal strokes that usually distinguish the imagery, style, or portraits of character in individual verses or stanzas. Brown was a reader of some breadth and sophistication. However, he rarely inscribed anything but his name in his books. Most of his books in the Keats House Library, even those whose worn pages indicate regular reading, are void of annotations and nearly free of markings. Even

<sup>19</sup> *The Keats Circle*, I, 254.

<sup>20</sup> A question that must arise here is why Keats would have used Brown's copy of *The Faerie Queene* if he was making the notations for Fanny Brawne. How did he expect to give her someone else's book? There are several possible explanations. Firstly, in his brief note to Fanny about the Spenser markings, which is our sole direct evidence for his intentions about them, he never clearly states that he plans to 'give' the Spenser text to her. Instead, he says rather ambiguously that he is 'marking the most beautiful passages in Spenser, intending it for you' (*Letters*, II, 302). This could mean either that he is 'intending' to give the entire Spenser edition to her or that he is 'intending' his markings to be made with her in mind, with the eventual aim of showing her or sharing with her those 'beautiful passages'. Even if he did plan to give her the Spenser edition, the possibility of his using Brown's text is not at all inconsistent with the cavalier habits of book borrowing among his circle of friends. Many of his books had been lent to him by friends, as Brown's catalogue of his library makes clear, and Keats was far from loath to mark and annotate these borrowed books (Owings, *The Keats Library*, p. 19). His proclivity to make use of Spenser texts in such a way may have been particularly strong. For his heavily marked copy of Hughes's Spenser was actually owned by George Keats as late as 1816, and the terms of its passage into John's hands have never been made clear. On at least one occasion, Keats even gave away a set of books that had been lent to him by someone else. This was a four-volume edition of Francisco De Moraes's *Palmerin of England*, which was lent to him by his publisher, James Hessey. Keats annotated it and then passed it on to Leigh Hunt's son, Thornton, who returned it to Hessey after Keats's death (Owings, *The Keats Library*, p. 23). If Keats could annotate and give away Hessey's books, he certainly could have done the same with those belonging to Brown, who was more forthcoming than anyone else in sharing his own personal resources with Keats.

his thirty-seven volume edition of Shakespeare's plays, which he must have used for his speculative biography, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems*, shows only a few markings. On those rare occasions when Brown did mark passages in his books, he usually employed a pencil. These markings seem guided mainly by an editorial interest in the etymology of odd words, which Brown checked and underlined, or the scansion of unusual pronunciations, which he worked out on the inner rear flaps of his books. His small number of more extensive markings seem directed by a critic's interest in the narrative development of long passages instead of a poet's delight in the imagery, style, or character sketches of individual lines. For he would mark an extended poetic sequence with one long, straight, and unbroken vertical line (Fig. 1). The annotations of his Spenser volumes, however, contain none of these habitual features. The sheer number of markings in these volumes, their appearance in ink, their distinctive style, and their patterns of emphasis even clash pointedly with the basic habits of reading and annotation. This contrast makes it safe, at least, to argue against Brown's hand in them.

The same features that rule out Brown, however, may suggest Keats's hand in their close match with the way he read and marked his books, especially *Hughes*. Keats usually marked his books with a pen and most often without the kind of carefulness and economy of Brown's practice.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he scored selections of poetry lavishly and rather untidily in obvious haste or enthusiasm. He showed little inclination for Brown's editorial focus on the odd word. He did not use checkmarks like Brown's. And he rarely practised Brown's habit of marking off extended passages with long, unbroken lines. Instead he habitually used underlinings and short marginal strokes with a concentration that betrays the eye of a lover of 'fine Phrases' and the sensibility of a voyager into the heart's labyrinthine apartments. For these markings usually single out striking images, memorable phrases, or poignant emotional displays within individual lines or small groups of lines.

The *Hughes* notations follow these general patterns but also display several features unique to Keats's way of reading and marking Spenser. Nearly every page of *Hughes* is marked, a frequency that exceeds even the most profuse annotations of other Keats texts in an obvious display of his special love for Spenser. Many of the noted passages concentrate on romantic love and its sorrows – especially in the case of Redcrosse and Una – which implies Keats's feeling for Spenser's unusual sensitivity to the pathos of romantic love. And finally, there are no marginalia, with

<sup>21</sup> The general distinction between Keats's habitual use of a pen and Brown's preference for a pencil is most evident in the copy of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* that Brown gave to Keats in 1819. It contains frequent notations and markings in pen, made rather untidily, which H. B. Forman attributes to Keats. It also bears a smaller number of pencil markings apparently made by Brown (H. B. Forman, *Poetical Works*, V, 306-7).



the exception of one reference to a source for Milton, among all of these markings – an absence that contrasts significantly with the lengthy marginalia that Keats inscribed in his other annotated books. This absence might be explained by his unique experience of spontaneous delight with Spenser, so memorably recorded by Clarke, which moved him to ‘ramp’ through *The Faerie Queene* instead of pausing to annotate.

Both these general patterns of annotation and the specific ones associated with Spenser obtain in *Brown*. Its pages are scored exclusively with the kind of underlinings and marginal strokes that are characteristic of Keats’s annotative style. They occur profusely and always in ink. They usually display the hurried, rather untidy look of the scorings throughout Keats’s annotated books. And in Keats’s typical manner, they distinguish memorable expressions and sentiments from larger passages.<sup>22</sup> Within these general patterns, the markings in *Brown* also resemble the special details of the *Hughes* scorings. On average, more than two of every three pages are marked – a frequency that corresponds among Keats’s extant books only with his scorings of *Hughes*. These notations also give a high priority, like Keats’s markings of *Hughes*, to sequences of emotional depth, particularly those depicting the sorrows of romantic love.<sup>23</sup> And finally, the *Brown* markings, like those in

<sup>22</sup> The markings of *Brown* also display a notable parallel with Keats’s method for distinguishing stylistic from thematic highpoints in the works he annotated. Caroline Spurgeon has demonstrated how he tended to underline verses for their melodic or descriptive beauty while placing a marginal stroke alongside them to emphasize their ideas or their emotional poignancy (*Keats’s Shakespeare* (1928), p. 24). This distinction was not adhered to with systematic rigidity, but it did shape one general pattern in Keats’s annotations, especially of *Hughes*. He tended to underline striking images, for instance, such as the following description of morning: ‘the rosy-fingered Morning fair, / Weary of aged Tithon’s saffron Bed, / Had spread her purple Robe through dewy Air’ (I.2.7). He similarly underlined examples of lyrical grace, especially those, like the following lines, noteworthy for their alliterative play: ‘There many Minstrels maken Melody, / To drive away the dull Melancholy’ (I.5.3). Keats frequently used marginal strokes, however, to note sequences of emotional drama, such as Sans-loy’s abduction of a pitiful Una: ‘And all the way, with great lamenting Pain, / And piteous Plaints she filleth his dull Ears’ (I.3.44). The *Brown* markings, though not systematically patterned, generally follow this basic distinction. Underlinings, for instance, concentrate in Keats’s typical manner on striking images – such as the simile for Arthur’s wrath over Maleger’s persisting assault, ‘as a Beare whom angry curs have touz’d’ (II.11.33) – and musical sequences noteworthy for their alliteration – such as the chiasmus of the following lines, ‘Out of his wavering seat him pluct perforce, / Perforce him pluckt . . .’ (III.7.43). Marginal strokes, in a contrast also characteristic of Keats’s style, frequently note passages of emotional poignancy – such as Britomart’s anguished divisions of mind over Artegall (V.6.5). (I have retained the original texts of *Hughes* and *Brown* whenever I refer to the marked passages of either edition).

<sup>23</sup> Here the interest in love’s sorrow runs even deeper than in *Hughes*. The ratio between marginal strokes and underlinings is consequently slanted much more noticeably to strokes locating sequences of mental drama and suffering. These modifications of the *Hughes* pattern are in keeping with Keats’s growing inclination toward Spenser’s sober side. Late in 1819, for instance, he felt particularly drawn to the Cave of Despair episode as an apt emblem for his own mental torment (*Letters*, II, 230). Helen Vendler notes how Spenser’s treatment of the sorrows of mutability became an increasingly