

Keats's Connections to other Authors: Oscar Wilde

John Keats and Oscar Wilde are well known in the English and Irish Literature for their remarkable poetry.

Oscar Wilde

- Born on October 16 ,1854 and died on November 30, 1900.
- He is an Irish poet, author, and playwright.
- He is famous for his works, "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.
- He was one of Keats's friends that was influenced by his works and writing.

“On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters”: A Footnote to Wilde's Sonnet

- In a journal article named *On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters”: A Footnote to Wilde's Sonnet* written by Brooks Wright, it is mentioned in the beginning that John Keats Dies in 1821, holding the belief that “his name was writ in water” (9). However, within ten years his friends were already gathering his letters.
- They created an auction on March 2, 1885 and sold the controversial letters. There were different authors present such as; Wilkinson and Hodge, among them was Oscar Wilde who made several purchases.
- On the day before he had written his sonnet, *On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters*.
- One of the sonnets Wilde wrote shows his inspiration to Keats.
- In his sonnet, “On the Same”, he assures his presence at the auction mart and his love for Keats’s work.
- He mentions in the sonnet, “ Yes I was present at the auction mart...Those letters which the world then knew by heart...I who knew Keats, and loved, was there to try...to purchase one, and from each “sickly eye”...” .

Continued

- Oscar Wilde loved Keats's work that he believed it should not be taken or sold away to anyone. He counts it as disrespect.
- He lays the blame on Fanny Brawne (Keats's lover).
- He consults her of How could she put "His letters into impious hands resigned, to which no veil is sacred, so they find...But shall they who loved his lightest word, and spared not gold, to snatch these from the public gaze away".
- In this poem: Wilde expresses outrage and sadness that his great idol John Keats' love letters are being sold at auction. Keats was a genius, and these letters were his private, personal, passionate things, and these filthy "brawlers of the auction mart" are trying to gain money out of his work.

Echo and Artifice: The Poetry of Oscar Wilde

- According to this journal article by Jerome H. Buckley, has claimed that Wilde is established as a master of the comedy of manners.
- According to literary historians Wilde is the most conspicuous, the most versatile, and so the most representative man of the English fin-de-siecle.
- However, he became well-known and sought his fame in the seventies and early eighties.

Wilde's Belief

“The art that appeals to laughter and the art that appeals to beauty are two different things”

How was Wilde Inspired by Keats

- Wilde was inspired by Keats's work by imitating other authors of what they would be writing from Keats.
- For example: Wilde imitates Swinburne's *Charmides* which was written with an affective sense of Keats's style, weighted with heavy past participles and weakened at the end by a mood-breaking apology: where Keats redirects the reader to Boccaccio and "the gentleness of old Romance".
- *Charmides* (1878-79) is Wilde's most ambitious and evident attempt at a Keatsian long narrative poem.
- As a poet and as a reviewer Wilde was continuously dedicated and loyal to the major Victorians.

"Charmides" and "The Sphinx": Wilde's Engagement with Keats

- Wilde identifies in Keats and praises a magpie attitude toward the raw material, according to Ian Ros.
- Wilde's youthful hero-worship of Keats is first evidenced in his letter of c. May 17, 1877 to Lord Houghton on the subject of the medallion portrait of the poet at his grave in Rome.

Wilde's love for Keats

- "Priest of Beauty" is what Wilde calls Keats.
- In a letter of March 21, 1882, to Emma Speed, Keats's niece, who send Wilde a manuscript of Keats's "Sonnet on the Blue " : now I am half-enorumed of the paper that touched his hand, and the ink that did his bidding...for since my boyhood I have loved none better than your marvelous kinsman...again I thank you for this dear memory of the man I love".

Cont.

Wilde once wrote,
“Keats’s grave is the
holiest place in Rome”
to him.

Primary Sources

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- Ross, Iain. "Charmides' and 'The Sphinx': Wilde's Engagement with Keats." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2008, pp. 451–465. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40347044.
- Buckley, Jerome H. "Echo and Artifice: The Poetry of Oscar Wilde." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 28, no. 3/4, 1990, pp. 19–31. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40002286.

Videos

- A song written by Oscar Wilde: At the Grave of John Keats.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d70yS-OJcUE>