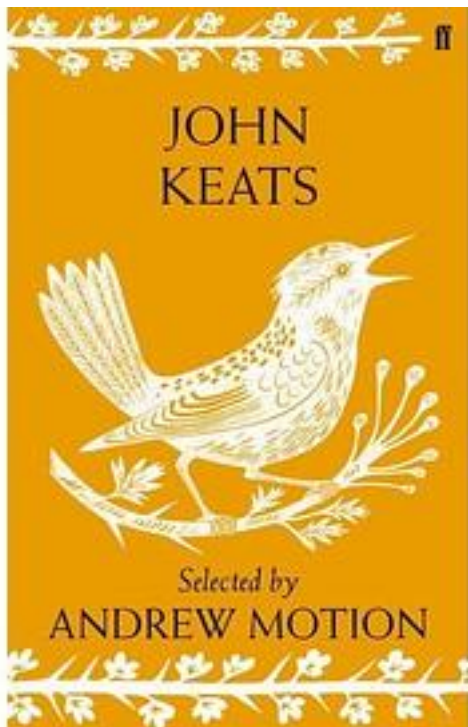


John Keats



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In his brief life, John Keats published just three volumes of poetry: a collection of early verse in 1817; a long, fairly unsuccessful poem, "Endymion", in 1819; and a final collection in 1820, which included most of the poems for which he is now famous. For many years, these three anthologies contained all that the public knew about Keats, but over time it has become apparent that an extraordinary body of manuscripts lay behind these poems. Among the most revealing of literary manuscripts, they include not only early drafts of such celebrated poems as "Ode to a Nightingale", but also letters to family, friends and fellow poets, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, J.H. Reynolds and Leigh Hunt, in which Keats expressed his thoughts on poetry. "Keats: His Life in

Manuscripts" presents, in chronological order, the surviving manuscripts of his finest poems and letters, often illustrated at actual size and in their entirety, thereby providing a unique visual record of the poet's creative processes. By looking directly at the poet's manuscripts, we can get a vivid sense of his rich imagination and restless, impulsive thinking. The accompanying commentary by Stephen Hebron explores each manuscript in detail, carefully tracing Keats' swift progress as a writer and thinker. The manuscripts themselves have always been prized, and, in his thoughtful introduction, Hebron tells the intriguing story of how, after Keats' death, his manuscripts were gathered together, jealously guarded, and finally bequeathed to public and private collections. Many collectors saw themselves as guardians of his legacy, and the ways in which they displayed or withheld his manuscripts, reveals much about the social and literary fashions of the last 200 years.

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