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## PREFACE

### **Rummagings 14: Archibald Lampman, the American Memorial to Keats, and Louise Imogen Guiney**

Archibald Lampman's admiration of John Keats is as well known as his indebtedness to him. "The English poet's ode 'to Autumn' seized Lampman's imagination as nothing else ever did, and conditioned his own seasons lyrics with their rich texture and elusive patron spirits," observes L.R. Early, adding: "[m]ore essentially, Lampman adopted from Keats the idea of a 'dream' wherein the individual can transcend time and strife. This is the key idea in Lampman's writing...Ultimately he was led to a renunciation of youthful dreams that parallels Keats's own development" (25). Nor was Lampman at all loath to admit that he was for a long time deeply influenced by Keats. "Keats has always been such a fascination for me and has so permeated my whole mental outfit that I have an idea that he has found a sort of faint reincarnation in me," he told Edward William Thomson on 25 April 1894. "I am only just...getting quite clear of the spell of that marvelous person" (*Annotated Correspondence* 119). While these statements alone are rich in potential for both a Bloomian analysis of Lampman in relation to his Romantic precursors and a postcolonial reading of his engagement with the literature of the English metropolitan centre, the purpose of this brief note is the far more modest one of placing on view an episode in his life that was occasioned by his admiration of Keats.

On 16 July 1894 a sculpture of Keats was unveiled in the Hampstead parish church of St. John in London at a ceremony attended by many of the stars of the British literary and scholarly firmament including Edwin Gosse, Coventry Patmore, Max Müller, Alice Meynell, Lord Houghton (Richard Monckton Milnes), and William Morris, whose Kelmscott Press printed the invitation.<sup>1</sup> The event was the culmination of a campaign among American admirers of Keats, most notably Charles Eliot Norton, Louise Imogen Guiney, and Fred Holland Day, to raise funds for the statue, a marble bust by their fellow Bostonian Anne Whitney that bears the inscription "To the Ever-Living Memory / of John Keats / This Monument Is Erected by Americans / MDCCCXCIV."<sup>2</sup> Although the project was certainly the brainchild of American—it was championed by, among others, James Russell Lowell, and the bust was formally presented by Day in his

role as Secretary of the American Memorial Committee—it also received support from Canadians, and at least some funding.

On 16 January 1893 Lampman wrote to Guiney explaining that “[t]he request for the Keats memorial fund”—a circular written by Norton that names her, Day, and Norton himself as persons to whom contributions may be sent—had “reached...[him] in a rather circuitous way after a long delay” and citing “illness in...[his] family” as the reason for a “further delay” in his response” (qtd. in Parrish 144). “For this I hope you will forgive me,” he writes, before turning apologetically to the contribution accompanying his letter:

I am sorry that I cannot send anything respectable. I shall have to make up for the smallness of its money value by the depth of the good wishes with which I accompany it. The enclosure is not even a single contribution from myself, but half of it is from Mr. Duncan Campbell Scott, whose name you perhaps remember in Scibners. It would give him pleasure to be permitted to add this to the Fund, and I think he would like to have one of the printed appeals such as you sent me.

If the spirit of Keats is still observant of mortal men he will know that Mr. Scott and myself, as much as anyone in the world, are indebted to his genius for daily strength, comfort and delight, and that no one is more grateful for the gift than we ...<sup>3</sup>

Yours very sincerely

A. Lampman

(qtd. in Parrish 144-45; final ellipsis in original)

A week later, on 23 January, Guiney informed Day that she has “acknowledged the receipt” of “[t]en dollars from Archibald Lampman and his friend Scott” and asks Day to “send the latter a circular, with a blessing... Care of A.L., Post Office Department, Ottawa, Can.”<sup>4</sup> At an angle across the top left side of the letter, she wrote: “Keep Lampman’s pretty letter if you like! It has a value within, as it indorses [sic] his indebtedness (exquisite poet is L., too!) to Keats.

When Guiney met Lampman while he was in Boston in the spring of 1893, her admiration of his work was extended to his appearance and manner. On 30 April, she wrote to Day:

Mr. Thomson of the Youth’s Companion brought Archibald Lampman here yesterday. You would love the fellow. He looks about twenty-five, though I dare say he is older; a clean-shaven face, with steady hazel eyes, and a severe young mouth which opens none too often. He is a slight, narrow, and slim [?]

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as B.B.<sup>5</sup> used to be; like him, is a great walker, and a good critic, has the same deliberate speech, the same bright brown clustering hair. In a word, he is another Haydon Johnny,<sup>6</sup> almost as close to the original; the projecting lip, however, is the under, not the upper. Altogether, a fine face, austere poetic. The boy philosophizes like five-and-seventy. I felt somewhat shy of him. How beautiful his work has always been! Do you know it well?

None of Lampman's surviving letters home from Boston mentions his visit to Guiney, the reason probably being that soon afterwards—on or about 29 April—he left Boston to return to Ottawa. The only reference to Guiney in his extant correspondence is in a letter of 13 November 1895, where he asks Thomson to convey his “very best regards and good wishes” to her (*Annotated Correspondence* 161).

Lampman's interaction with Guiney is merely a supplement to what is already known about his physical appearance and his attitude to Keats, but it does cast fresh light on his manner and his effect on others, and for that reason it is worth placing on view.

## Notes

- 1 This information is “drawn from “An American Memorial to Keats,” “American Memorial to Keats,” and Joseph Anderson.
- 2 The circular soliciting funds for the project, a copy of which is held by the Houghton Library at Harvard University, lists Norton, Guiney, and Day as contacts and includes an engraving of the bust by A.W. Elson and Company of Boston. See Albert Elmer Hancock, facing 106 for a picture of the bust, images of which can also be readily found on the internet.
- 3 Parish states that Lampman's letter included “a testimonial,” which he relates to his “[l]ater” and “more formal” “The Character and Poetry of Keats.” He also observes that “[a]nother Canadian poet, Bliss Carman, fell into the spirit of the project by contributing a poem, the proceeds of which were to be donated to the fund...Guiney undertook to get the poem printed, but the *Century* and Scribner's turned it down, and she gave it, regretfully, to the *Independent*,” where, of course, Carman worked. That “For a Memorial to John Keats” was rejected by the *Century* and *Scribner's* is hardly surprising: addressing Keats as the “captain of beauty,” it culminates in a stanza in the vagabondia mode that would probably have given him a paroxysm of embarrassment: “Bravest and gentlest and best of the elder land and dear, / Thou spirit of earth and morning, until the morning appear / Ride with us into the dark with a cheer!” (qtd. in Parrish 145).
- 4 This and the subsequent letter are in “The Papers of Louise Imogen Guiney” in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and are quoted here with permission. For their invaluable help in locating letters quoted in this note, many thanks are due to Jennifer Brathovde, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Barbara B. Blumenthal, Mortimer Rare Book Room, Nelson Library, Smith College, Anne Causey, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Emilie L. Hardman, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Christopher M. Laco, Rare Book and Manu-

- script Library, Columbia University, and, especially, Patricia Fanning, Department of Sociology, Bridgewater State University.
- 5 "B.B." is almost certainly the distinguish historian of Renaissance art, Bernard Berenson (1865-1959), who taught at Harvard and was a member of Guiney's and Day's circle of friends. "[S]lim" is somewhat conjectural, the most obvious alternative being "short," which does not make sense in context but may have been a slip of the pen. In *Keats and the Bostonians* 62n., Hyder Edward Rollins and Parish quote Ralph Adams Cram as describing Berenson in the eighteen nineties as "beardless, looking like the early portraits of John Keats." Berenson was well known as a "great walker."
  - 6 Guiney refers to the 1816 pen and ink sketch of Keats ("Johnny") by his friend Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846) that is now held by the National Portrait Gallery, London. In it the poet's upper lip is, indeed, "projecting."

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