



THE KEATS-SHELLEY

*Young Romantics
Prize* 2016

THE KEATS-SHELLEY YOUNG ROMANTICS PRIZE 2016

In 2016, the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association ran its second Young Romantics Writing Prize aimed at poets and essayists aged between 16 and 18. This new competition ran parallel to our long-established Keats-Shelley Prize.

The Chair of Judges was the renowned biographer and critic Professor Richard Holmes, OBE, who followed in the footsteps of Dame Carol Ann Duffy, Sir Andrew Motion, Stephen Fry, Penelope Lively, Kathleen Raine, and Tom Paulin. Helping Professor Holmes make the difficult choice of selecting the winners were the poets Matthew Sweeney and Jo Shapcott, and the scholars Professor Sharon Ruston and Professor Simon Bainbridge.

2016's poetry theme was 'After Frankenstein', a title suggested by the bi-centenary of Mary Shelley's Gothic masterpiece which she began as an 18 year-old during an infamously wet weekend in 1816 in the company of Lord Byron and PB Shelley. The Young Romantic Essayists could explore any aspect of the life or work of the Romantic poets and their circles.

The Young Romantic Essay Prize (worth £500) was won by Sofia Amanda Bening with 'The Stuff that Romantic Dreams are made Of'. 17 year-old Sofia studies at Ngee Ann Polytechnic in Singapore.

First place in the Young Romantics Poetry Prize was 16 year-old Riona Millar with 'Sonnet after Frankenstein', which she read live on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. A pupil at James Allen's Girls' School, Riona won a week's creative writing course with the Arvon Foundation. In second place was Harry Jenkins with 'Prometheus 3.0'. 17 year-old Harry is an A-Level student at Warwick School. In addition to their prizes, the winners also received special editions of Frankenstein and Richard Holmes' Age of Wonder, published by the Folio Society.

All the judges highlighted the difficulty of choosing winners from a formidable shortlist. 2016's shortlisted Young Romantic Poets were: Amanda Louise Minkkinen, from Denmark, with two entries - 'In the Brambles of Eden' and 'From Rain to Rain to St. Andrews and Back Again' - and Lauren Falconer with 'The Monster of My Waking Dreams'. On the



Winners, shortlisters and judges of the Young Romantics Prize and Keats-Shelley Prize, 2016

AFTER FRANKENSTEIN

THE KEATS-SHELLEY AWARDS CEREMONY 2016

The winners of the Keats-Shelley Young Romantics Prize 2016 were announced by Professor Richard Holmes, OBE, at the Awards ceremony held on 13th April. The day began with a special reading from *Frankenstein* by the acclaimed actors Damian Lewis and Helen McCrory at 50 Albemarle Street, before the main event at the Royal Festival Hall in the evening.

The audience, including Prize Judges Matthew Sweeney and Professor Sharon Ruston, was welcomed by Jude Kelly, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre. 'Poetry,' she said, allowed 'the human imagination to dream the greatest dreams.' She then introduced Richard Holmes, who said how struck he was by the international nature of the shortlists (entries from Singapore, Denmark, America and Australia) and the high standard of work by the Young Romantics.

Richard Holmes praised Sofia Amanda Bening's 'splendid, impressionistic essay' 'The Stuff that Romantic Dreams are made Of', which examined several Romantic writers' relationships to dreams. He reserved his highest praise for the two Young Romantics poets, declaring himself 'genuinely astounded' by the winner: 16 year-old Riona Millar with 'Sonnet after Frankenstein'. The poem was at once traditional, a sonnet with lyrical touches, and modern in its attempt to find language for a creature unable to speak. The runner-up was Harry Jenkins' 'Prometheus 3.0', which vividly re-imagined

the Frankenstein myth in the 21st century context of genetic research.

The winning poets then read their work before an enthusiastic audience. 'The reading was very nerve-wracking,' Harry Jenkins said. 'But I greatly enjoyed presenting my work in the way I had envisaged it.' Riona had already recited 'Sonnet after Frankenstein' live on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme earlier that day. One wonders what was more frightening: an audience at the Royal Festival Hall or John Humphreys?

'Reading on the Today Programme was simultaneously amazing and terrifying, and a wonderful experience overall. Reading at the Prize was considerably easier. I've been in school poetry festivals for the last few years, but very enjoyable nonetheless.'

The Keats-Shelley Memorial Association would like to thank Richard Holmes and the rest of the Judging Panel: the poets Matthew Sweeney and Jo Shapcott, and the scholars Professor Simon Bainbridge and Professor Sharon Ruston.

We would also like to thank: our sponsors, The Cowley Foundation, and the John S. Cohen Foundation; The Royal Festival Hall for hosting the Awards event; the Arvon Foundation; and The Folio Society for donating prize copies of their anniversary editions of *Frankenstein* and of Richard Holmes' *The Age of Wonder*.



Riona Miller

Poetry Prize Winner

Riona, aged 16, is a student at James Allen's Girls' School, studying History, English Literature, Latin and Philosophy at A Level. She has been commended for her poems by the Kingston Reader's Festival and the Basil Bunting Poetry Awards. In 2011 was runner-up in a Guardian short story competition. Last year she was one of the winning Foyle Young Poets. She would like to study English Literature at university, and hopes to be a full-time poet.

Sonnet after Frankenstein

Wreathed in laurels; glossy leaves unfurl, coiled,
The great pale gloaming thing unravels limbs,
Grins, hitches weeping gums wide, growling hymns,
Praising Father, Master, he who slaved, toiled

To build this monstrous structure - he is soiled
With these grimly yellowed stains, he who brims
With boundless love and wonder - awed, he skims
Round flat stones through his father's
throat - unspoiled.

The night, a temptress, plucks his peeling heart,
Wet, from his dappled chest, as moonlight blinds
Him; stumbling, mismatched, made up of spare parts
And engine oil. He trips, and falls. He finds

Great pale gloaming blooms that feed on the moon:
He wakens not, with frail blossoms strewn.

Riona's advice for next year's Young

Romantics. *I think the most important thing that I've been told is that if you don't enter, you definitely won't win. It is also quite useful to start anew, working from a theme. But if you have a poem that seems to fit, make sure you redraft a little before you enter!*

Riona on the Romantic poets. Keats,

Shelley and Byron stand out to me as hugely important figures within the evolution of poetry. They are driving forces within the Romantic movement that allowed poetry to develop and blossom into what it is now.

Harry Jenkins

Poetry Prize Winner

17 year-old Harry Jenkins is a pupil at Warwick School, and has been studying Coleridge's poetry for A Level English Literature. He was made the Warwickshire Young Poet Laureate for 2016.



Prometheus 3.0

First, he was a Titan, the bringer of light. Lucifer.
Then, a madman - lightning wracked, household name for quack.
And now he is my father, observes carefully as I pivot from
formaldehyde womb. Skin flushed, pretty pink loam-grown,

hairless, bare. Anatomical diagrammatical pure perfection.
I see myself in fluorescent glasses, puce growth on Petri dish eyes.
I am beautiful; behold, a marvel. Monster.

Fluidous sinew, smooth swivel-roll of muscle, I glide, power
across the room. Fault. My flesh is foam, the bubbles pop.
I collapse. They recycle me slowly, note-taking my mess apart.

Regresses later, I am made proper, permanent. They teach me,
six-foot five child, and I learn letters, words, language, literature -

love. They come to science, and I see the horror of my creation.
I pull gently at their floor-coats, kindly try to tear a piece to hide
my hideous lobster-boiled skin with their cool blank conformity.

When I begin to yearn, yank, rip it from them they isolate, insulate,
inoculate me. Stupor-sleeping, I hear: 'Physical: success. Mental: unstable. Fit for:
farming only.

Address.' When a new colour needle comes, the nervous lamb luckily faltered;

I flipped it from her grip to her wrist. Her empty coat fit. No one noticed me slip
away, away.

Now I hide like everyone else, and tell myself, I will show the world the real
monster, one day.

Harry's advice for next year's Young

Romantics. *Get others to read your poems. I find they often notice gaps or problems that you struggle to see yourself.*

Harry on the Romantic poets. *The work of Keats, Shelley, Byron and the Romantics has always seemed to me to be a turning-point, where poetry began to be more about communicating ideas with ease, regardless of societal standing. Poetry should be for everyone.*



Amanda Louise Minkkinen **Shortlisted Young Romantics Poet**

Amanda Louise was born in Slagelse, Denmark and has split her time between Denmark and the United States until she permanently moved to Denmark in 2014. Amanda now lives in Nyborg, Denmark, and has recently graduated from Nyborg Gymnasium, where she studied the International Baccalaureate. Now on her gap year, Amanda intends to study Social Anthropology or Sociology at university afterwards.

In the brambles of eden

Mother, do not look at the feather-light scalpel at my forehead
doc's going to make me angelic

The ducks above me pop and neon amnesia stings my eyes
blue, pink, yellow lettering in supermarkets, on signs, on cans of soup
yet my mind splits off and sticks to you, mother

it splits off into other directions too - oranges, apple pie,
leaden shuffling, enflamed limbs, tulips. The autumn trees
hiss and swell and spit out black leaves. My weak sea legs

and my watery misery drove me from you, mama, not I.
I lie on the speckled white linens, a soaked sponge
heavy with love. Once, I saw a man drown his dog

I saw shaking legs, heard yipping between waves. I continued
home, thick-thighed and plump with love, through nettle wilderness,
below stone fruits, over earthy lumps of carcasses.

Mama, pull the clouds from my throat. Steal the beads,
the gems, the nonsense spider webs like cataracts in my eyes.

Amanda Louise's advice for next year's Young Romantics.

Write whatever you feel like writing.

Amanda Louise on 2016's Prize Theme: 'After Frankenstein'.

Because Frankenstein is one of my favourite books, I thought it would be the perfect poetry opportunity.

Sofia Amanda Bening

Essay Prize Winner

Sofia Amanda Bening is a 17-year-old Mass Communications student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore. 'Although I have always been interested in the Romantics and the Romantic period, by no means have I ever studied the works in depth, let alone write an entire essay about them. I am so glad I took the plunge.' Sofia hopes to continue studying media and culture in a university in either the UK or America.



We have excerpted Sofia's essay here for reasons of space. It will be published in full in the Keats-Shelley Review in Spring 2017

The Stuff That Romantic Dreams Are Made Of

We all dream. We dream when we sleep, but also when we are awake; the humdrum of reality has us transporting ourselves to fantastical realms. This whimsical dreamland of ours is very important to us as human beings. It serves as an escape from our everyday lives. Dreams, whether those that manifest in our slumber or in our state of boredom at our desks, are our getaways. But they seemed to be more than just that to the Romantics.

Could it be that dreams fuelled the greatest literary works produced in the Romantic era? After all, it is widely-known that Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* after having a dream about the creation of a new man by a scientist with the hubris to play God. If we look at the other Romantic greats, like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats and Lord Byron, we will find that dreams had a big part to play in their works as well. These Romantics took to heart and fully explored Shakespeare's notion that "we are such stuff dreams are made on". What exactly did dreams mean to them?

We dream to remember.

Mary Shelley famously wrote *Frankenstein* after having a dream about the events that unfolded in the story. However, what about the dreams that actually occur in the story itself?

In *Frankenstein*, there are at least two levels of a dream, or dream-like vision experienced by the titular Victor Frankenstein. The first, which is given a dream-like quality by his insistence that it is not "the vision of a madman" (Shelley 47), is his hopeful daydream of what his scientific creation of another human being would mean.

Victor refers to this vision he has, along with his hope that his creation might be "beautiful," when he later laments, on actually witnessing it come to life, that "the beauty of the dream vanished" to be replaced by "horror and disgust" at a "wretch" more "hideous" than a "mummy again endued with animation" (Shelley 52-53).

Victor's second dream takes a much darker turn.

He rushes from his laboratory after recoiling in disgust at the creature and tries to escape his problems by focussing his thoughts on his fiancée, Elizabeth.

This horrifying nightmare that Victor experiences raises many questions and theories. There are Freudian critics who have said that this Victor's nightmare of digging up body-parts in Mother Earth is rooted in an unconscious desire for a reunion with the body of his deceased mother. Is this nightmare a representation of Victor's real urges and deep desires? He could have been pointing us to the third answer to our question: we dream to fulfil our most profound wishes.

In the early 1900's, Sigmund Freud proposed that our dreams have symbolic meanings that relate to the fulfilling of our subconscious wishes and desires. Freud theorized that everything that we remember from a dream after waking up is an indication of what we unconsciously desire to do or accomplish. In our dreams, these thoughts and urges are at their most primitive, hence the vivid and horrifying nature of some of our nightmares. Victor could have been subconsciously revealing and unearthing his deepest urges and wishes.

We dream to fulfil our deepest desires.

One poem, written by John Keats, encapsulates all three reasons for why we dream: *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. It tells of a knight's obsession with a lady he saw "in the meads". We find out that the knight is on the verge of death. The lady's romantic gestures "lulled (him) to sleep" and he "dream'd" the "latest dream he'd ever dream'd". In this dream, the knight is transported into some kind of hell where he sees the lady's previous victims, "pale kings and princes" who warn him of the dangerous woman.

Like Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode", "*La Belle Dame*" also conveys the message that we dream to heal. In reality, Keats was in love with his neighbour, Fanny Brawne, while he was stricken with tuberculosis and on the brink of death. The knight in the poem is enchanted by a beautiful seductress who traps him and causes him

to fall into a coma-like slumber. Keats' choice to portray the knight's downfall in this way could be, like Coleridge, a way to heal and cope with his own feelings.

Keats' feelings of love for the woman are clearly expressed in the way he describes her: "full beautiful - a faery's child". He then describes the romantic gestures he carried out for her, including making a "garland for her head". This strikes a similarity with Byron's "The Dream", in which the persona recounts romantic memories with a beautiful lady he is passionate about.

Above all, the dominant theme in "La Belle Dame" is the extent to which the knight is entrapped by the woman. The knight's nightmare of hell is a Keats' representation of the consequence of ungoverned emotion and perilous obsession. Much like how the knight was enraptured with the beautiful lady, we sometimes have such a strong desire for certain things that they appear to us almost frighteningly in our dreams, emerging from our subconscious. Reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein, these subjugated and repressed emotions could ultimately be the death of the individual or his salvation. "La Belle Dame" showcases the power of dreams and their influence on the leading literary

minds of the Romantic era.

Dreams were an integral part of the works and lives of the Romantics - some were deeply affected by them in real life and put them into the form of literature to ease emotional distress, while others saw them as inspiration for new ideas. Regardless, they have taught us many things about our subconscious mind. Our dreams serve a much greater purpose than just to put on a show for us to enjoy while we sleep. They present to us memories, images and the deepest and darkest thoughts we unknowingly keep. They have a power over us that the Romantics used to fuel their creative process, no matter how much pain and confusion they felt.

It is fair to say that our dreams represent who we are. The Romantics were fascinated by the human spirit and individual personality, and I believe they found both very much alive in dreams. Everything about a person can be told from what he or she dreams, and how a dream makes he or she feel.

Why do we dream? We dream because dreams, as Byron writes, ". . . do divide our being; they become a portion of ourselves as of our time".

Sofia Amanda's advice for next year's Young Romantics. *The most important thing is you write with your own unique voice. Write about what is important to you and convey the feelings you have towards whatever you choose to write about. Let it shine through your words and readers will connect with you. The Romantics did it too.*

Sofia Amanda on winning the Young Romantics Essay Prize. *It has definitely inspired me to write more. The prize is, in a way, assurance that I can write anything I put my mind to. Winning the prize has proved that I can write whatever I want to if I have the desire to grow as a writer*



KEATS-SHELLEY MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

The Young Romantics Prize is run by the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, which supports the Keats-Shelley House in Rome, where Keats died, and which since 1909 has been a museum of the younger Romantic poets.

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Photo: Claudio Ciabochi

Richard Holmes on

THE FABULOUS INSPIRATION OF FRANKENSTEIN!



It's still amazing to me that Mary Shelley began the novel in a simple notebook (which still exists in the Bodleian Library, Oxford) when she was only 18 years old in June 1816, and published it when she was just 20 in March 1818. By the time she returned to England from Italy at the age of 25, the first theatrical version, *Presumption! – or the Fate of Frankenstein* – had already made her famous.

It was staged at the English Opera House in July 1823, and opened to huge audiences and scandalous publicity: “Do not take your wives, do not take your daughters, do not take your families”. Then five separate theatrical adaptations, 1823-1825, also took it to Paris and eventually New York. In London, Mary Shelley herself attended in the stalls: “Lo and behold! I found myself famous! Frankenstein has had prodigious success as a drama...in the early performances all the ladies fainted and hubbub ensued!” Now, 200 years later, maybe she is even more famous than her husband the poet Percy Shelley?

Her story of Frankenstein and his monstrous Creature has always had a strange power to set people's imagination on fire. It is the first true science fiction, and the first unforgettable parable about the perils of modern science. It has been made into more than 100 films: notably with Boris Karloff, in 1931; with Marty Feldman in *Young Frankenstein* in 1974; and Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* in 1994. There have been over 70 stage dramatizations since 1823, including musical comedies, numerous television adaptations and pop music albums (by Alice Cooper and others). There has been a Frankenstein on ice, and various Frankenstein graphic novels and Frankenstein cartoon serials (*The Munsters*). Danny Boyle's stage production, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller, at the National Theatre was a huge popular hit as recently as 2011.

A Frankenstein ballet by Liam Scarlett was staged at the Royal Opera House in May 2016. Scarlett made a shrewd observation: ‘People have a very stereotypical view of what they presume Frankenstein to be...Actually I don't think many people really know the heart and soul of the

story. It's essentially about love.... The Creature is like an infant. He's desperately seeking a parent or loved one to take him through the world and teach him everything.”

It's true that in most film or stage productions, there is one great limitation compared to the original novel. The Creature is barely allowed to speak more than a few grunts! Whereas for Mary Shelley, the Creature becomes paradoxically the most articulate of all her creations. Starting with a few halting words, he ends by delivering great soaring arias of speech, appealing for affection, for justice, for rights: for Human Rights. “I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed....”

It is now known there are three versions of the novel. The first was written by Mary at great speed in her Geneva notebook, largely during the winter of 1816-1817; the second was carefully revised by her, lightly edited by Percy Shelley, and published in 1818; and the third was radically revised by Mary alone and re-published with a fascinating new “Author's Introduction” in 1831. This tells in retrospect the famous story of the ghost-story competition at the Villa Diodati in the stormy summer of 1816, during which (according to Mary) the whole idea was originally born. All three versions have now been published separately in modern editions, and would, in my view, make a fascinating comparison for any young fiction writer just setting out in their career.

And this is exactly what KSMA's Young Romantic Competition is all about. As judge of the 2016 Prize, it vividly demonstrated to me just how astonishingly “alive, alive!” the whole story still is. This year the strongest entries were in the poetry section, notably the sonnet by the sixteen year-old Riona Millar: a wholly contemporary image of the Creature but captured within the most traditional verse form, beautifully achieved. There were also several fine prose pieces, though I have to admit that I missed just one idea: what if Mary Shelley had made her scientist a woman – Victoria Frankenstein! Ah, what then.... ?

Richard Holmes

DAMIAN LEWIS & HELEN MCCRORY

LAUNCH 2016'S KEATS-SHELLEY AWARDS

2016's Keats-Shelley Awards were launched in style when acclaimed actors Damian Lewis and Helen McCrory gave a special reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. To mark the 200th anniversary of Mary's Gothic masterpiece, the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association had invited Romantics, old and young, to contribute poems on the subject 'After Frankenstein'.

And so it was on the morning of the annual Keats-Shelley Awards, held on 13th April, Prize-winners, journalists and judges gathered at 50 Albemarle Street to enjoy a Frankenstein breakfast: coffee, pastries, fruit and – appropriately – 'Bloody Marys'. Albemarle Street was the family home and the offices of the publishing firm of John Murray and it was here that Byron's memoirs were burnt in the fireplace by John Murray and others on 17th May 1824.

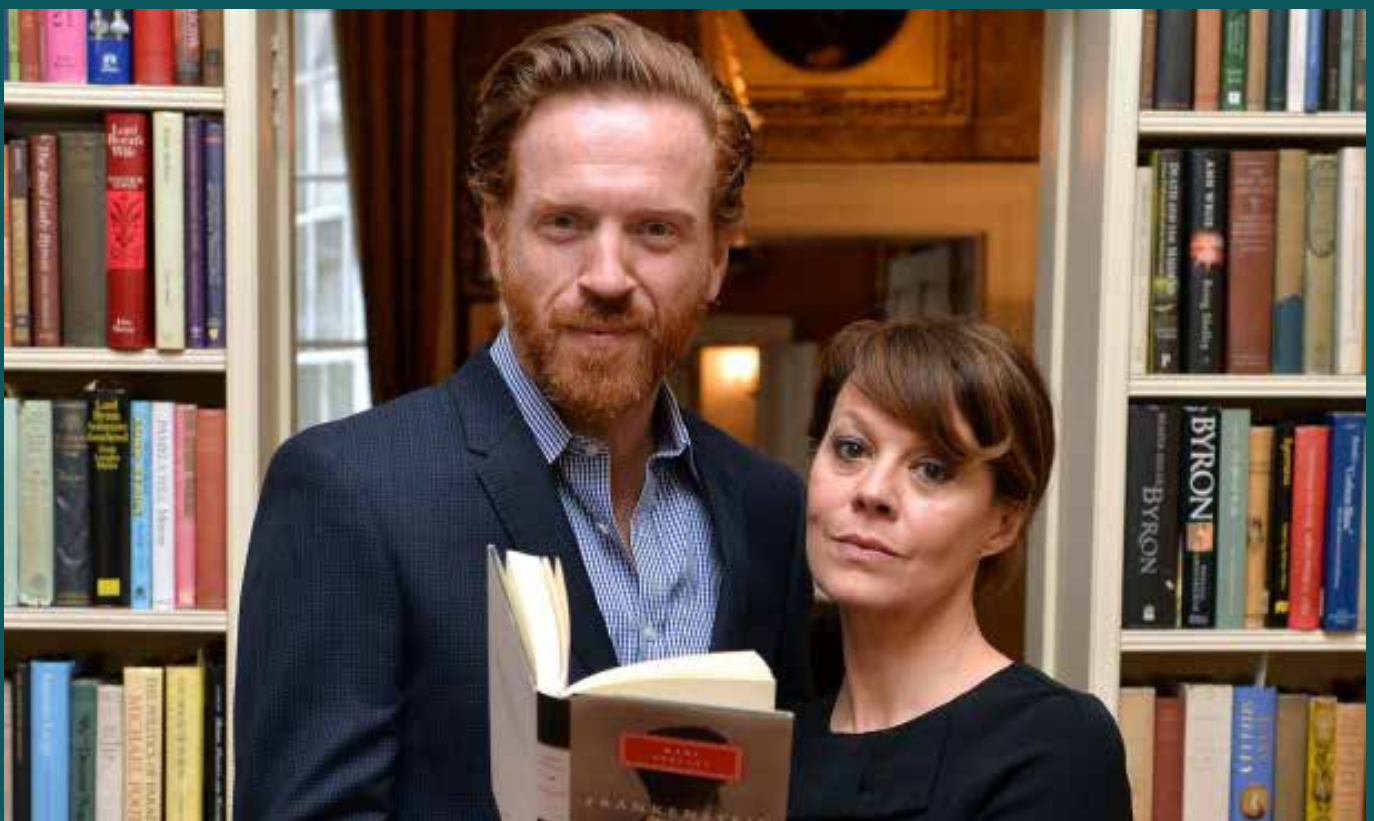
Once the winners of the Keats-Shelley Prizes were announced, Damian Lewis and Helen McCrory recreated with consummate skill the genesis of Mary's extraordinary creation. The

performance took place under the discriminating gaze of Lord Byron, or at least his portrait.

Helen McCrory, as Mary, was superb: 'I busied myself to think of a story...which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror...' Her words seemed to prompt Damian Lewis, playing Shelley, to open a Pandora's box in which he saw his own face in that of the 'cursed creature.'

It was an extraordinary day. An exhibition included two pages from Mary Shelley's original notebook, with annotations by Shelley himself, and a copy of *Frankenstein* dedicated to Byron by its author. Later, Pele Cox, with Jay Villiers, Nick Rowe and Richard Goulding, gave four performances by candlelight of her dramatic evocation of that haunted evening. The day was perhaps best summarised by the journalist Boyd Tonkin: 'the whole event was like having steak tartare for breakfast – rich and raw.'

Sue Bradbury



THE KEATS-SHELLEY

Young Romantics Prize 2017

TWO COMPETITIONS OPEN TO ALL YOUNG ROMANTICS

Submission dates 12th September 2016 – 15th January 2017

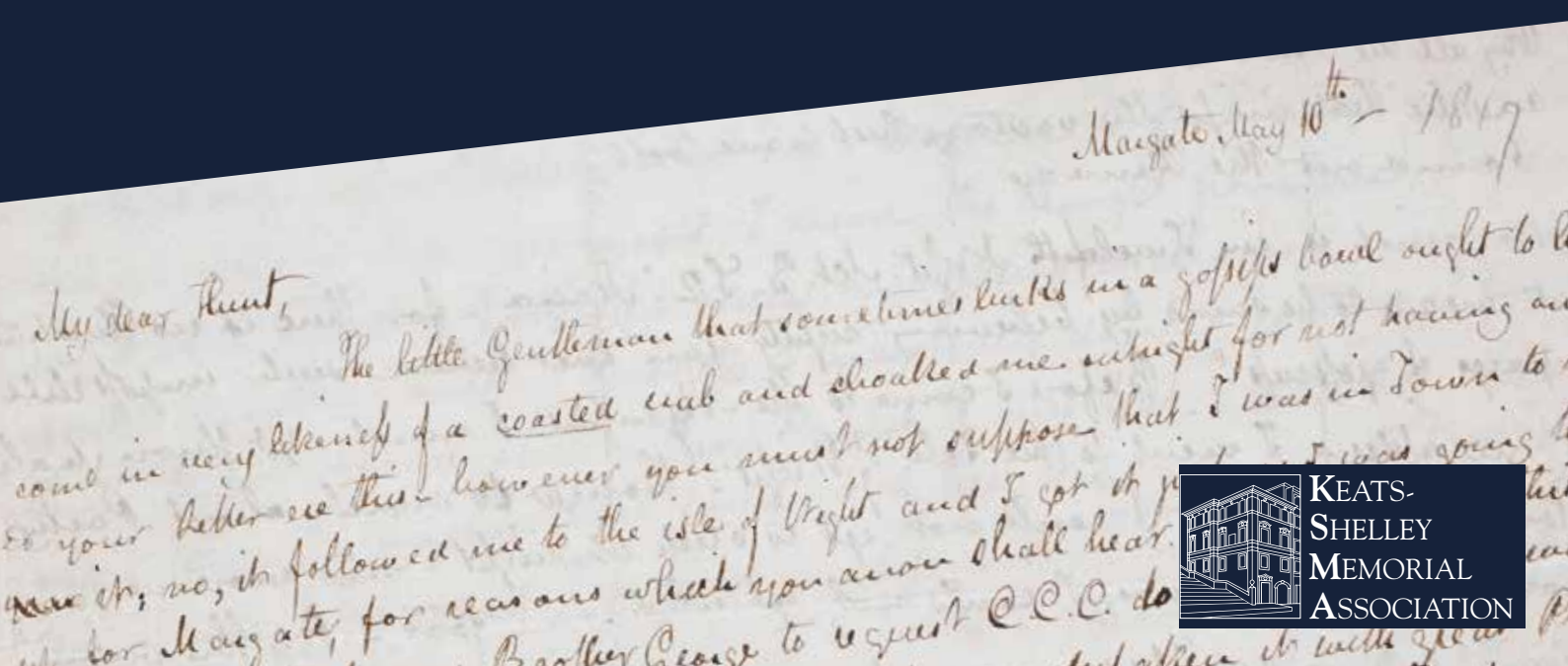
1. A POEM: based on the theme **TO A FRIEND**. This year's Competition commemorates the bi-centenary of the publication Keats's *POEMS 1817*, which contains numerous poems to his friends. Published when Keats was 23, it collected together poems Keats had written over the preceding years.

2. AN ESSAY: based on the work or lives of the Romantics and their circles.

Winners will receive cash prizes and winning entries will be published.

Candidates on the shortlist will be invited to a prize ceremony in London in April.

Full details at keats-shelley.co.uk





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