

“Only the Good Die Young:”

Shelley’s *Adonais* and the Making of a Romantic Star

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Andy Warhol coined the word “superstar” to describe the figure of the “pop icon,” whose life became a work of art. While perhaps imperfectly discerning the importance of “image”—a term that has displaced “identity”—Warhol was, consciously or not, acknowledging the Romantic roots of Modernism. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling observe, “We have been, and still are, in a phase where our poets are Romantic even as once poets were Christian, that is, whether they want to be or not” (*Romantic Poetry and Prose* 6).

The inception of the artist as a work of art arguably resides in the second generation of High Romantics: Byron, Shelley, and Keats, who all cultivated their own artistic personae. Byron was recognized for both his poetic talent and his personal life, ostracized from English society for his sexual exploits that continued as he traversed Europe. Shelley, the most prolific mythmaker among them, created the paradigm for the modern artist through his own sensational life and art, and eventually through his remarkable mythopoeic makeover of Keats, himself and Byron, in his elegaic tribute, *Adonais* (1821). Shelley himself has always been a divisive poet.¹ In 1954, when a young Harold Bloom replied to critic F. R. Leavis’s query that his dissertation topic was Shelley, Leavis insisted, “I have settled Shelley.” Bloom bristled: “Shelley always buries his own undertakers” (*Take Arms Against a Sea of Troubles* 185), echoing William Michael Rossetti’s 1891 observation: “*Adonais* is a composition which has retorted beforehand

¹ As Frederick A. Pottle observes in “The Case of Shelley,” the critical controversy regarding Shelley’s place in English letters began during his life, sparked by his radical political beliefs and his unconventional lifestyle as much as it was by his poems (*English Romantic Poets* 291).

upon its actual or possible detractors" ("Preface" to *Adonais*).

Byron achieved fame as a poet, but in their own lifetimes Keats and Shelley struggled for recognition, and it was largely because of their impact on ensuing generations—from Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, the Rossettis, Swinburne, Hardy, and Yeats, for instance—that they gained posthumous fame. This trio of Romantic poets died young—Keats at 25 in 1821, Shelley at 29 in 1822, and Byron at 36 in 1824. Remarkably, the three most famous poets of the prior generation—Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge—all outlived them. A premature demise, then, contributed to the mythology of the younger generation of High Romantics, and the glamor created by an early death that surrounds them has endured. The heavy mythologizing of matinee idols (e.g., James Dean and Marilyn Monroe) and pop icons such as Brian Jones and others among the "27 Club," a group of musicians who died at that age, suggests the romantic legacy of the artist who encounters an early death. As we shall see, Jones, the talented founder of the Rolling Stones, serves as an especially apt example of the modern artist whose life has been transformed into a romantic myth.

Despite the discrepancy between the known facts of Keats's death and Shelley's sensational reckoning of those facts, their mythic potency has persisted in other surprising ways as well. In *Shelley: The Man and the Poet*, Desmond King-Hele insists on the celebrity-building impact of *Adonais*: "The persistent exploitation of Shelley's imagery in the cinema world has at least proved its viability Shelley was doing the job of publicity-agent, providing a build-up for a new poetry-star—a ludicrous yet logical comparison" (308-09), showing the Modernist myths which inform contemporary perceptions of the artist in cinema and music owe a debt, indirectly, to Shelley's image-building poem. Like Bloom and Trilling, King-Hele asserts that the distinction between the romantic and modern sensibilities is bridged in Shelley's life and art,

emphasizing his uncanny ability to anticipate parliamentary reform, religious tolerance, women's rights, and scientific advancement (372), but also through his prediction of an early death for himself.

That Shelley was moved to compose this tribute was fortunate. A natural adjudicator, despite his passionate temperament, radical social views, and bohemian lifestyle, he was best suited to negotiate in verse the collective fame of himself, Byron, and Keats. Byron was too satirical, Keats too painfully shy for the task. Moreover, Shelley's erudition—his familiarity with the literature of classical antiquity, his urbanity and cosmopolitan lifestyle—made him well-suited to write in this ancient pastoral form. Shelley's talent for and interest in the acquisition of languages was a long-standing one. From an early age he immersed himself in reading and translating classical Greek literature and throughout his life, especially as he traveled Europe in his later years, he returned to his favorite writers and texts advancing his skill as a translator and absorbing the fine points of genre and form. Richard Holmes remarks:

In the last eighteen months of Shelley's writing . . . foreign literary presences became more and more important to his work. Dominant are the figures of Dante, Calderón and Goethe. They stand as powerful if shadowy figures behind his original poems, and also are brought into focus in a series of masterly poetic translations. These works, together with the prose translations of the *Symposium* of 1818, the solid workmanlike verse rendition of Euripides' *Cyclops* of 1819, and the "Homeric Hymns," combined to make Shelley by far the most outstanding literary translator of his generation (*Shelley: The Pursuit* 612).

In his prefatory materials to *Adonais*, the poet employs an epigraph consisting of an excerpt from an elegy from Moschus for Bion. Bion, according to Moschus's elegiac tribute, was poisoned "at a date not far from around 250 B.C." (quoted in William Michael Rossetti's critical edition of *Adonais*), which may be a reason Shelley acknowledges Moschus's poem, as we shall

see in his transformation of Keats's death in *Adonais*.

To understand how Shelley's elegiac tribute to Keats contributed to the mythology of his fellow poet and to his own posthumous image, one need only examine a few ways *Adonais* deviates from the known facts of Keats's demise. Keats became seriously consumptive in 1820. When Shelley learned of his illness, he wrote to Keats inviting him to join his own entourage in Pisa. Keats did not accept this offer, but Shelley's concern was merited; Keats spent his last months in Rome, accompanied by the painter, Joseph Severn, where he died on February 23, 1821. Shelley did not learn this sad news until April, when he immediately began to compose an alternative demise for Keats in *Adonais*, a poem in fifty-five stanzas that he completed in a few months.

In his elegy, Shelley imparts to Keats a compelling persona: that of the sensitive artist, slandered cruelly by unfeeling reviewers. "The critics killed Keats," has become so famous in literary studies as to have taken on a life of its own, despite its flat contradiction that Keats died of tuberculosis, which even Shelley acknowledges in his "Preface" to the poem.² However, Shelley was insistent that Keats' death was indeed accelerated by hostile reviews. He imagines not one but three deaths for Keats in the course of the poem. In the second stanza, Keats lies dead, "pierced by the shaft which flies / In darkness" (2.11-12), the savage remarks of his critics. Later, Keats with his "mighty heart" dared "the unpastured dragon in his den," and meets a heroic end as Shelley continues his invective against these "herded wolves," "obscure

² "John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the [23rd] of [February] 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of 25 ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." (Shelley's "Preface" to *Adonais* www.gutenberg.org/files/10119/10119-h/10119-h.htm)

ravens,” and “vultures” (28.244-46). In stanza 36, Shelley settles on another death, insisting Keats has “drunk poison,” and scorns the “viperous murderer,” the “nameless worm” who, in the future, will become nothing more than a “noteless blot on a remembered name” (36.316-20). The shift from “a shaft,” to “poison,” echoes Moschus’s tribute to Bion, but also emphasizes the importance to Keats of the 18th-century poet, Thomas Chatterton, alluded in stanza 45. Chatterton committed suicide in 1770 at seventeen by drinking poison, feeling neglected as a poetic genius, an image he cultivated for himself. The High Romantics mythologized Chatterton as the neglected poetic genius.³ Recognizing Chatterton’s bid for post-mortem fame, Leo Braudy asserts: “Chatterton’s suicide encouraged an assumption that the passage from life to immortality through death might be a willful decision” (*The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* 440). In his 1960 New Wave film, *Breathless*, Jean-Luc Godard wryly inverts this order of achieving immortality after death when the writer Parvuleco (Jean-Pierre Melville) declares in an interview his greatest ambition is to “become immortal and then die.”

Shelley magnifies the cruelty of unscrupulous critics by portraying Keats as an effeminate poet-martyr, a delicate flower blasted by their malice. We see this in his “Preface”: “The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses, was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where cankerworms abound what

³ For instance in “Resolution and Independence,” (1802) Wordsworth writes: “I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy, / The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride” (43-44). Keats dedicated his poem, *Endymion*, to Chatterton: “Inscribed to the memory of Thomas Chatterton” www.gutenberg.org/files/24280/24280-h/24280-h.htm Interestingly, four years after Chatterton’s 1770 suicide, Goethe published *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, a novel that quickly sent waves of enthusiasm across Europe. According to translator, David Constantine, Werther is based in part on the suicide of Goethe’s fellow student, Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem in October 1772, who like Werther had shot himself for love of a married woman (“Introduction” x). Goethe’s 1774 novella created fashion trends from clothing to dinnerware, and at least one suicide (“Introduction: The Reception of Werther” xxvi-xxviii). In *Frankenstein* (1818), this novel is one Victor’s creature names as influential in forming his views of love.

wonder its young flower was blighted in the bud?" In stanza six, Keats is "Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished" (line 48). Shelley then laments: "The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew / Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste; / The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast" (52-54). Urania mourns her loss: "O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert" (27.235), emphasizing Keats's fragility.

In his self-figuration in the poem, Shelley⁴ shares with Keats the role of poet-martyr. During the funeral procession, he appears, "Actaeon-like" (31.276). Urania does not initially recognize this mourner, "but with a sudden hand" he "Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow, / Which was like Cain's or Christ's" (34.305-06). The allusion to Acteon, who was torn apart by his hounds, along with Cain and Christ, portray Shelley himself as much as Keats as a persecuted artist. In stanza 28, Shelley portrays Byron as a formidable, Apollonian "python-slayer" (line 250), who fells critics with his satirical rejoinders. Byron's charisma that inspired the "Byronic hero" and found full expression in the poet's glamorized death while fighting for Greek liberty (albeit from a fever) is employed in *Adonais* when the "masculine" Byron is foretold to avenge the "feminine" Keats.⁶ Two stanzas later Byron appears as a mourner, along with the Irish poet, Thomas Moore, whom Shelley admired. In reality, neither poet was a particular admirer of Keats' poetry (*Romantic Poetry and Prose* 466).

After the procession of grievers, Shelley transfigures Keats into a star, completing the apotheosis. He rejoices that Keats now dwells with other immortal poets like those alluded to in stanza IV—Homer, Dante, and Milton—and, in Shelley's own idiosyncratic style, using inversion to striking effect, he expresses his eagerness to join Keats by transcending the barrier of life:

⁴ Added to this portrayal of Keats as effeminate, King-Hele observes that, in his translation of the Greek epigraph Shelley selects for the poem, "By substituting the Latin for the Greek 'star' Shelley has turned the male Aster into Stella" (308), preferring the feminine to the masculine form of the word "star" for his apotheosis of Keats.

“’Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither, / No more let Life divide what Death can / join together” (53.476-477). Shelley no longer grieves but celebrates, expressing a prescience of his own death, reiterated in the elegy’s sublime conclusion: “The soul of Adonais, like a star, / Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are” (55.494-95). Harold Bloom, adding to Yeats’s observation, points out the “star” is specifically the “morning star,” a repeated presence in Shelley’s poetry.⁵ Shelley shows us death for Keats is not the end, but a beginning, having won his wager with the future—a poetic election Keats himself intuited—despite what he composed for his own epitaph: “Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water.” In an 1818 letter to his brother, George, Keats wrote: “I think I shall be among the English poets after my death” (quoted in Stacey, *The Paris Review*). Likewise, Shelley insists in *Adonais* that Keats will join other Romantics also destined “to Fame’s serene abode” (5.45)—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and implicitly himself (*Romantic Poetry and Prose* 459). Fame was not viewed as immodest or conceited by these young poets. In his first collection of essays, *The Round Table* (1815-1817) William Hazlitt, who traveled in the same circle as Keats and Shelley, insisted in “On Posthumous Fame”: “The love of fame is a species of emulation” (quoted in Silver, *John Keats and Benjamin Haydon: The Pursuit of Beauty and Truth* 199).

Remarkably, Shelley’s imagery in the final stanza of *Adonais* uncannily anticipates his own death the following year: “. . . my spirit’s bark is driven, / Far from the shore, far from the

⁵ Bloom insists that a study of Shelley’s poetry reveals his “internalized quest to reach the limits of desire. He touched those limits . . . and died, but not in despair of the quest’s mature phase, upon which he had begun. If he passed a Last Judgment upon himself. . . it was perhaps because he failed his own vision, and not because the vision had failed him” (“Preface to the Cornell Paperbacks Edition,” *Shelley’s Mythmaking* vii). The “star” in the concluding lines of *Adonais* is the morning star that Yeats identified as “the most consistent, indeed dominant and ruling symbol in Shelley’s poetry.” The “star of infinite desire,” it embodies Shelley’s mythopoeia: “The desire to confront a Thou in all things, to stand in relation to everything that is created as a reality meeting a reality seems to underlie Shelley’s myth of human desire.” The morning star, which outlasts the others but itself fades in the light of day, symbolizes for Shelley the desire of the poet to sustain a relationship with an animated universe, one necessarily frustrated as the moment of union and creation fades away (*Shelley’s Mythmaking* 193).

trembling throng / Whose sails were never to the tempest given . . . I am borne darkly, fearfully afar" (55.488-492). On July 8, 1822, one month before his thirtieth birthday, Shelley drowned accidentally with his two companions, Edward Williams and a young boat-hand, Charles Vivian, when their sailboat was caught in a storm in the Gulf of Spezia located off the northwestern coast of Italy. Elsewhere (e.g., in *Alastor* and more obscurely in "Stanzas Written in Dejection") Shelley also intuits his impending death, an event that, in turn, became heavily mythologized by the century's end.⁶

Shelley's mythmaking, then, in *Adonais* contradicts the facts of Keats's life and death. Keats died of consumption, not from hyper-sensitivity to criticism, although there is evidence he was adversely affected by the cruelty of a few reviews of his *Endymion* and *ad hominum* attacks.⁷ Literary "reviews" of the day (many published anonymously) habitually engaged in sarcasm and the *ad hominem* attacks which Shelley denounces so forcefully in *Adonais*. Nearly every periodical served a political party, therefore not always—or even often—assessing the poetry's intrinsic value. There was no concept of "disinterestedness," a fact that Matthew Arnold lamented in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864). Shelley certainly was himself the victim of such invectives, and it is true Keats's poems received their share of unfavorable reviews. However, Shelley insists this hostility precipitated Keats's decline, not an unreasonable conclusion to draw, but scarcely the sole cause of his death. In fact, notoriety can

⁶ A hideous attack on Shelley's poetry and person appeared in the April 1819 *Quarterly*. It likens Shelley to an "Egyptian of old," whose broken chariot brings about his ruin, so that "finally, he sinks 'like lead' to the bottom" of the sea, and "is forgotten." Shaken by the viciousness of this invective, Shelley tried to make light of it in a letter to his publisher Charles Ollier, dated October 14, indicating he found this attack "comic" and that he was "amused" by it: "It describes the result of my battle with their Omnipotent God; his pulling me under the sea by the hair of my head, like Pharaoh; my calling out like the devil who was game to the last; swearing and cursing all in comic and horrid oaths . . . pretending not to be drowned myself when I am drowned; and lastly, being drowned" (Quoted in Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* 545).

⁷ See Shelley's "Preface" to the poem, and Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* 405n and 647-48.

perpetuate a writer's visibility. Leo Braudy comments: "Hostility was . . . a mark of the kind of success . . . the new writer wanted," pointing out that Shelley wrote his publisher asking especially for negative reviews, since "it is objection and enmity alone that rouses my curiosity" (*The Frenzy of Renown* 430), a sentiment that anticipates Lord Wotton's quip in Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, that "there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about" (4).

The precocious talent of all three poets has been enhanced by their early demise; still, Shelley's insistence that he was the youthful, persecuted artist has contributed to Keats's popularity, an idea Byron references with some incredulity in *Don Juan*: "'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle, / Should let itself be snuffed out by an article" (XI. line 60).⁸ In *Illness as Metaphor* (1979), Susan Sontag observes that tuberculosis ("consumption") became known as the romantic disease of expanding consciousness. As the body wasted away, one's creative sensibilities increased proportionately, giving rise to the belief that disease and art are intimately connected: "Indeed, the romanticizing of TB is the first widespread example of that distinctively modern activity, promoting the self as an image" (28). Shelley's portrayal of Keats helped create this mythology that the disease enhanced artistic talent, and might even be viewed as a "beautiful death." Disease and art, especially the idea that consumption augmented consciousness, was reinforced by the fact that several writers, among them Franz Kafka and D. H. Lawrence, also succumbed to it.

Another myth seeded in *Adonais* is the close brother-band of poets consisting of Byron,

⁸ Shelley wrote to Byron of Keats's death promulgating his myth that his demise was precipitated by harsh critical reviews in the *Quarterly*. Not convinced, Byron replied: "I did not think criticism had been so killing. . . . I read the review in the 'Quarterly.' It was severe—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others" (Quoted in Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* 648).

Shelley, and Keats. Certainly, the proximity of their births (within seven years of each other) and their untimely deaths on or near the Mediterranean between 1821 and 1824, fostered the myth. However, biographers and acquaintances have observed that, while Keats and Shelley were friendly, theirs was not an intimate relationship. Keats remained wary of Shelley, finding annoying his propensity to offer unsolicited advice about his verse and sensing their rivalry, one reciprocated by Shelley, who thought little of most of Keats's verse with the exception of *Hyperion* which he especially admired (Holmes 359-62; 613). Furthermore, Keats and Byron had little tolerance for one another, Keats repelled by Byron's satirical bent, Byron critical of Keats's sentimentality and effusiveness.

In *Adonais*—and in the circumstances of his own life—Shelley presents us with a series of historical binary oppositions between established political and social institutions and the revolutionary spirit he embraced, many of which also anticipated the “generation gap” and its consequences in the 1950s and 1960s. Both periods featured political unrest, experimentation in the arts, and the rise of a youthful counter-culture. Possessed of superior sensibilities, these Romantics died young, feeling alienated by a jaded generation of elders. Certainly, Shelley's aversion to his own privileged class, his criticism of parliamentary laws, and especially of established religion shows a generational divide. He disdained all patriarchal authority. Shelley and Byron, who lived unconventional lives, were alienated from their culture and became expatriates. Shelley's sensational expulsion from Eton for his fundamentally misunderstood “atheism”; his political agitation in Ireland, which resulted in his being both shadowed by a British agent and in physical attacks on his person while living in Wales; and the household pattern of the *ménage à trois* created an image of him as a young subversive, disowned by his family. Byron's infamous sexual exploits, particularly with his half-sister, Augusta, his bizarre

menagerie of exotic pets, and his heroic death have contributed to modern conceptions of a certain artistic and heroic image.⁹ Even the young Keats, less eccentric than the other two, was described by his acquaintance, Henry Stephens, as having adopted a bohemian demeanor, dressing “*a la* Byron. The collar turned down & a ribbon tied round his neck without any handkerchief. He also let his moustachios grow occasionally” (quoted in Walter Jackson Bate 131).

After his death, Shelley’s reputation as a subversive grew, but this made him strangely attractive. Moreover, Holmes asserts that out of remorse for their estrangement, the widowed Mary was determined to rescue Shelley’s image, “to make a cult of him in death” (*Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Wanderer* 197). These efforts to mythologize Shelley as an “angel” had the reverse effect. For instance, Matthew Arnold lamented Shelley’s demonic side, yet then echoed Mary’s words: “The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley’s poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is ‘a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain,’” (quoted in *Footsteps* 198) an image that has influenced valuations of Shelley as a poet.¹⁰

The artist as a work of art embodied by Shelley and his circle continued through the century. The Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s fame rests on his

⁹ Byron, who lived to the age of 36, died of a fever on April 19, 1824, in Greece, and his remains were sent to England where he was buried in Nottinghamshire, mourned by the Greeks and English alike. It is true he was engaged in a fight for Greece’s liberation from Turkey, yet a popular myth remains that he died in an actual battle rather than from a lingering illness.

¹⁰ Holmes quotes Mary Shelley’s letter to Jane Williams a few months after Shelley’s death, expressing she herself was “blessed by an elemental spirit’s company & love—an angel who imprisoned in flesh could not adapt himself to his clay shrine & so has flown & left it” (*Footsteps* 197). Despite her good intentions, the result of Mary’s mythologizing was “to prove a disaster” (197) as Arnold’s quote demonstrates.

sensational life as well as his art. His adulterous love affair with Jane Morris; the suicide of his unhappy wife, Lizzie Siddal, prompting Rossetti's remorseful act of thrusting his poems into her coffin (later exhumed); his Byronic *menagerie* of exotic pets in his Chelsea flat; and love of fine china, are legendary. Jerome McGann argues that Rossetti's charismatic personality made him the quintessential 'modern' artist: "Turner is a master, Rossetti is not. Tennyson and Browning and Swinburne define the highest points of Victorian verse, not Rossetti. Yet the age's two most imposing critics, Ruskin and Pater, both saw Rossetti as the period's central artistic presence" (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must be Lost* 2). A serendipitous detail of Rossetti's life—his direct connection with the romantic legacy—is that his maternal uncle was John William Polidori, Byron's physician and author of *The Vampyre* (1819).

At the century's close, Oscar Wilde perhaps best exemplifies the artist as a work of art. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) Lord Henry Wotton, first alluding to Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," tells the remorseful Dorian: "Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets" (181-82). Wilde's own flamboyant life—represented by his wit, "green carnation" and his use of his physical body as an artistic statement—marks him as a romantic epigone. Wilde's early death, another prerequisite for stardom, also contributed to his iconic status. Such assumptions set the stage for the next epoch, which more or less consciously adopted this mythology.

Thus, the Romantic legacy of posthumous fame continued into the twentieth century. On July 23, 1969, Rolling Stones founder and musical prodigy Brian Jones drowned in his swimming pool at age 27. Unresolved controversies surround his death. Like Keats, Jones suffered from an affliction of the lungs, in his case, asthma. Like Byron who was a legendary swimmer despite his deformed foot, asthmatic Jones was also a strong swimmer and his

asthma inhaler was found at the side of his pool. He was a heavy drinker, but an autopsy did not show a remarkable alcohol content in his bloodstream. Those with him the night he died tell wildly inconsistent stories. Some maintain Brian Jones was murdered, fuelling the dark and persistent rumors about his untimely death. Brian Jones represents the modern incarnation of the romantic artist. His image as the talented musician, ahead of his time, sparked his mythic status immediately after his death. Jones was the visionary who introduced into rock music incredible innovations: the use of the dulcimer and sitar, for instance, and the infusion of Moroccan music, Jajouka. But it was his troubled life, and the unsettling circumstances of his premature death, that propelled Jones to his *post mortem* iconic status.¹¹

Viewed as a decadent musician who wasted his talent on drugs and legendary sexual indulgences, Jones is also perceived as the prophetic, self-destructive artist. His one-time girlfriend Anita Pallenburg, recalls: “When I first bumped into the Stones, they were like schoolboys. Brian was so far ahead of them . . . He was sensitive, highly strung, totally ahead of his time. And also part of *another* time, the dandy with his clothes and all of that . . . he was *way* ahead of his time” (quoted in Stephen Davis, *Old Gods Almost Dead* 142). Pallenburg’s observations about Jones read as a virtual checklist of qualities we now associate with the modern artist: brilliant, neurotic, innovative, and yet strangely connected with the romantic past, as her remark about his “dandy” appearance makes clear. He also cultivated an androgynous look, often dressing identically himself and Pallenburg. And the idea of the fragile Keatsian artist is also evident when, in a row with Pallenburg, Jones’s ribs were once broken (Laura Jackson, *Golden Stone* 147). It is also remarkable that his death at age 27 in 1969 has

¹¹ Like Rossetti, Jones displayed a careless disregard for money; Rossetti kept drawers of cash, unconcerned that he was frequently robbed by his servants; Jones compulsively and carelessly retained piles of money and other valuables in his home.

fueled the myth of “The 27 Club,” with an ensuing list of musicians who died the same age— among them, Jimmi Hendrix and Janis Joplin (1970), Jim Morrison (1971) and more recently, the sensational demise of both Curt Kobain (1994) and Amy Winehouse (2011).

Two days after his death in 1969, during a Rolling Stones concert in Hyde Park, front man Mick Jagger payed tribute to Jones. Strutting onto the stage, he hushed the audience, paused, and then recited a passage from *Adonais* (all of stanza 39 and lines 460-66 of stanza 52), thus casting himself as Shelley to Jones’s Keats.¹² The myth of the romantic artist remains the deathless song that Shelley—and his fellow poets—imparted to the ages.

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¹² Video of this exists at www.theguardian.com/news/2014/jul/06/mick-jagger-brian-jones-hyde-park-observer-archive. Later, in 1996, The Cure released their own tribute to Shelley’s poem, titled “Adonais.” Many other examples of how the Romantics continue to enjoy an iconic status in contemporary music may be cited. A few songs that pay homage to these poets and their works include Rush’s “Xanadu” (1977), Iron Maiden’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1984) and Taylor Swift’s “The Lakes” (2021).

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