

TO JOHN KNOWLES

*Somerset, August 31st, 1809*

[...]

Your account of the Nunneries you have visited, confirms Hamlet's verdict: "Frailty, thy name is woman!" How self-contradictory, that the "animal of beauty", as Dante calls woman, should exchange her claims to social admiration and pleasure, and the substantial charms of life, for the sterile embraces of a crucifix or some withered sister, by the dim glimmer of cloistered light,—lost to hope, and marked by oblivion for her own!

[...]