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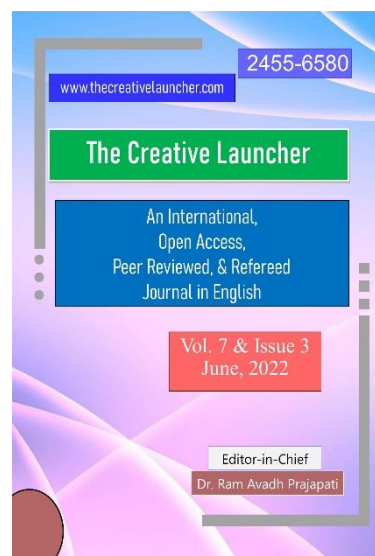
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☞ Research Article



## Actualizing the Traits of Romanticism in the Poetic Expressions of John Keats

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### Abstract

In many ways, John Keats is the most romantic poet ever. Unlike classical poetry, which seeks to portray social experience, romantic poetry focuses on the total expression of the person. Various romantic poets include political or social commentary in their works. But Keats' poetry is not a means of conveying any prophecy or message. His poetry is for the sake of poetry. There is no moral, political, or social significance to it. Thus, it is the truest poetry. According to Peter, "the addition of strangeness of beauty" is what gives literature its romantic element. Keats is most romantic in his straightforward quest for beauty, in everything else less so. Deity is beauty, and the truth is beauty in his eyes. His faith is beauty; thus, he will always find joy

in things of beauty. He fully loses himself and his surroundings in his search for beauty. Romantic poetry describes the world of dreams rather than reality. In a realm of romance and beauty, the romantic poet looks for an escape from the harsh truths of reality. Insofar as he is the most escapist of all the poets, Keats is the most romantic. In his “Ode to a Nightingale”, the poet contrasts his own misery with the delight of the bird. The defining quality of Romantic poets is sensuality. Keats is primarily a sensualist poet.

**Keywords:** Portrayal of Nature, Straightforward, Deity, Escapist, Sensuality, Individualism, Romanticism, Mysticism, Hellenism

### Introduction

If one analyzes John Keats’ poetry seriously, one will find him the last but the best romantic poet in English literature. He is not a social poet so he never explains the situations in the manner of reasoning. Social and political topics are addressed in social poetry. John Keats does not write on societal issues because his poetry is of the romantic type. He keeps himself away from them and avoids touching them. Insofar as the objective of poetry is concerned, he does not think it’s necessary to explain what is happening in the world. In contrast to John Keats, many great poets depict societal issues in their works. They parody society by using negative language to show the absurdities of people. John Keats does not address politics or society’s values in his poetry since he is completely romantic. Some poets discuss politics, while others comment on people’s behavior. John Keats wrote lyrics that each reflected his personal struggles. His poetry makes suggestions. It’s neither for the purpose of denouncing somebody nor to educate members of any society. He does not provide his compendiums with any advice or information. His poetry is morally bankrupt. His speech is not belligerent. He writes poetry most efficiently for its own sake. John Keats is regarded as the purest poet in the annals of English literature as a result. Romantic poetry must have some pure poetry. However, John Keats considers himself to be a romantic poet and believes that one of the fundamental characteristics that define him as such is his desire to write poetry only for the sake of writing it. The most crucial element of love poetry is performance. It may be found in John Keats’ poetry, which elevates him to the status of a chic romantic poet.

English Romanticism Prof. Cazamian says, “attains the final stage of its progress in Keats.”<sup>1</sup> In the romanticism-dominated era that Wordsworth and Coleridge created, Keats developed as a poet. He acknowledged their significant effect and commented with fervor, “Great souls are presently lingering on earth.” Keats carried on the traditions of the great romantic poets in his poetry, which is where they culminated in his work. His poetry has all the elements of the romantic movement that distinguished poetry in the nineteenth century. Let us now dissect the romantic rates of Keats’ poetry. Compare the figure for Autumn:

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep,

Steady thy laden head across a brook;

Or by a cider press, with a patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozing's hours by hours.<sup>2</sup> (“Ode to Autumn”)

Or that of Saturn in Hyperion:

Upon the sodden ground  
 His old right hand lay never less, listless, dead,  
 Unsceptered and his realm fewer eyes were closed.<sup>3</sup> (“Hyperion”)

Keats is sensual from beginning to end. However, his thinking developed and his affections grew. His mature poetry displays an intellectual awakening and a spiritual devotion. However, his position in the outside world was not only the blatant idolization of uncomplicated pleasures. His senses were changed, and their acuity was so imaginative that it made the fairness of the real world much more beautiful. Keats' mind, as a critic has noted, is primarily sensual via direct action, but it also functions through reflex action, transitioning from sensuousness into feeling. Quite simply, some of his factories are really sensual. Although Keats was a romantic in execution and organization, his pictures were told and inspired by the Hellenic way of life. His poetry used ancient story ideas, but they were given a romantic twist. Although Endymion, Lamia, and Hyperion are traditional characters in the tale, they are treated romantically. The only works that are both romantic in theme and in execution are “The Eve of St. Agnes”, “Isabella”, and “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”.

### **Romantic Element in Keats’ Poetry**

In essence, Keats is a romantic. Old Hellenism and romanticism converge in his poems. Hellenism is the Greek influence, and by romantic poems, we mean love and adventure poems that are initially composed in romantic dialect and are commonly infused with the medieval holy atmosphere. The romantic poet evokes the menacing possibility that man could fail. To give his poetry a romantic air, the romantic poet employs a number of prejudices. The storm, the moonlight, the flowers, and other examples of beauty are all introduced. He describes inventive comparisons and conceits, sensual pictures, and unexpected events. “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” and “The Eve of St. Agnes” are two of Keats’ two amorous poems that are written in a fashionable manner. For example:

I set her on my pacing steed  
 And nothing else saw all day long.  
 For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
 A fairy's song  
 She found me roots of relish sweet  
 And honey wild and manna dew,  
 And sure, in language strange she said  
 I love thee true.<sup>4</sup>

We can see Keats’ love of romanticism in these words from La Belle Dame Sans Merci. If P.B. Shelley was the highest exponent of the romantic sense of the unity of nature, then Keats was the pinnacle of the romantic sensibility to outward appearance. He experiences life as a succession of intensely felt feelings. Every word of his writing is filled with evidence of right, touch, and scent in a way that is unmatched by any other romantic poet. Instead of aggressive inward effort, unresisted contemplation was his goal. Keats was the most passionate poet to ever worship beauty. He set beauty as his standard:

Beauty is truth, truth is beauty, that is all  
 Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.<sup>5</sup>

Keats is a master of incisive phraseology and pen-portrait, just like many romantic poets. The brief, vivid portrayals of Keats that may be referred to as his word-painting masterpieces, in which he uses numerous words to establish connectives to create a portrait that is frequently of enormous dimensions, are perhaps more distinctive to Keats than these creative utterances.

His poems “Isabella”, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”, and “The Eve of St. Agnes” are all romantic in scope and execution. All of the romantic building blocks, such as a courageous spirit, enduring love, fastness to death, noble and chivalrous spirits, adventurous adventures, bizarre and strange effects and locations, and mysterious fairyland casts, should be firmly established in those poems. There are hints of love in several of the Odes, such as the “Ode to the Nightingale” and the “Ode to the Grecian Urn”. For example:

And magic casements  
Opening on the foam of perilous seas  
In fairylands forlorn.<sup>6</sup>

#### **As a Poet, Keats’ love for beauty**

Romantic poets had a passion for beauty, and it was their duty to capture it in all its forms and manifestations in their works of poetry. Keats was the greatest visionary in this regard since his beauty was built upon beauty. Each word of his poetry is loaded with magnificent elegance. The poet of beauty Keats once said, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever”. Later, he came to associate beauty with truth, saying in Hyperion:

For it's the eternal law,  
That first in beauty should be first in might.<sup>7</sup>

It was Keats’ charge in life to love and produce beauty. It's no small thing for Keats to say, “Matthew Arnold, to have so favored principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with verity, and of both, with joy.”<sup>8</sup> Keats himself took pride in being the poet of beauty. However, he wrote, “I’ve left no immortal work behind me nothing to make my musketeers proud of my memory; but I’ve loved the principle of beauty in all effects, If I should die.”

#### **As a Poet, Keats’ Love for Nature**

All romantic writers had a passion for the natural world, and Wordsworth and Shelley are better naturalists than Keats. Without seeking any mystical significance in the natural world's objects as Wordsworth did, he appreciated nature for what she was. He was overcome with happiness at the fairness and allure of nature. He loved every emotion there was on earth, and he was uplifted and inspired by every season. For him, the poetry of the soil was still very much alive. In the fields, he was in his element. His nature changed as a result of the freak's humming, the sight of the flower, and the sun's shimmer. In all of his odes, poetry, and Endymion, he has left behind horrifying descriptions of nature's brutes. Hudson says, “Keats loved nature just for its sake and for glory and fairness, which he everywhere plant in it. There was nothing mystical in this love and nature was no way freight for him, as for Wordsworth and Shelley with spiritual communication and meanings.”<sup>9</sup>

Keats admired nature and gave her a higher interpretation for her own sake as opposed to the compassion that the human spirit read into her via its actions and desires. Through all

the senses—eyes, cognizance, nose, touch, etc.—Keats' soul may reach the natural world outside. Wordsworth had a clear vision whereas Milton had a good eye for detail. Keats finds beauty in all of nature's manifestations, both as a protector and a destroyer. The dominance of art over nature is the fundamental thesis the poet advances in the Ode. Everything takes on a lasting persona thanks to art. The numerals carved into the Charnel are just as lovely and current now as they were back when they were alive.

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
The song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold lover, never, canst thou kiss.  
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou have not thy bliss,  
Forever wilt thou love, and she is fair!<sup>10</sup>

Keats believed that the beauty of art was identical to the beauty of nature. The trees cannot shed their leaves since they remain perpetually in full bloom. The spring will never stop. Always put the piper on the pipeline. The lover will continue to savor his beloved's affection. His forepart will always be on fire, and his language will always be parched.

#### **Keats uses the power of imagination in his poetry**

Keats had the strongest imagination of any Romantic poet, and this capacity was constantly at its peak in him. The trees cannot shed their leaves since they remain perpetually in full bloom. The spring will never stop. Always ride on the piping with the piper. The lover will continue to savor his beloved's affection. He'll always have a tongue that's parched and a forehead that's scorching.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,  
Forever planting, and forever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloyed,  
A burning forehead and a parching tongue.<sup>11</sup>

He could reproduce the Elizabethan love, the medieval love, the old-world love, the love of beauty, the love of chivalry, and the love of adventure in his mind, much to his joy. For him, poetry was a realm of pure fantasy, an enchanted place where only those with the ability to see fantasies and portrait fantasies could live. It was a place of luscious languor where magic permeated the air and time passed like a dream, and its worth was only determined by how exquisite and intense its pleasure was.

#### **Keats uses strange notes of weird sadness in his poetry**

Romanticism was nature in the soil of melancholy and weird sadness. In Keats' poetry, the note of melancholy and sadness is struck in a hundred places. We hear it not only in "La

Belle Dame Sans Merci”, “Ode to a Nightingale”, and “Ode to Melancholy” but also in poems dealing directly with nature. The poet strikes this sad note of despair in lines: -

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes  
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.<sup>12</sup>

The Indian Maid’s lament in “Endymion” is particularly representative of this haunting note of sadness in Keats’ romantic poetry.

### **Keats uses Love for fine phrases in his poetry**

Romantic Poets are pleased with fine expressions and pictorial descriptions. Keats loved fine expressions, and a perfect expression delighted him with a sense of intoxication. His poetry abounds, in beautiful expressions and expressions in which to quote Robert Bridges, “all the far-reaching coffers of language are concentrated on one point.”<sup>13</sup> About the felicity of Keats’ expressions Matthew Arnold comment, “Shakespeare a work it isn’t imitative indeed of Shakespeare, but Shakespeare in that rounded felicity and perfection of expression of which Shakespeare is the great master.”<sup>14</sup> And akin to the imaginative expression are the poet’s masterpieces in the world- oil, so exquisitely beautiful and romantic in their coloring. How brightly the poets paint the magic casement in “The Eve of St. Agnes” and how fine is his oil of “Lamia”;

She was the gordian shape of dazzling hue  
Vermilion spatted, golden, green, and blue  
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard  
Eyelike a peacock, and all crimson barred.<sup>15</sup>

### **Medievalism in John Keats’ Poetry**

The emphasis Keats places on love over action and exciting adventure is a crucial aspect of his medievalism. Keats had a deep affection for the Middle Ages. Keats was naturally drawn to the allure of the Middle Ages since he was largely a poet of pure imagination with little or no significant interaction with reality. In “The Eve of St. Agnes”, “The Eve of St. Mark”, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”, and “Isabella”, Keats honors the Middle Periods. Keats does more than just mimic the grandeur and chivalry of the Middle Ages in “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”. The allusion to the lovely grotto, “honey wild and manna dew,” and the dream-vision of the arrangements of lords, tycoons, and troops maintain throughout the entire song the feeling of awe and reverence that’s related to the medieval mind. The lyric’s abundance of evocative traces, such as the phrase, “And Madeline slept in the theatre of stories old,” provides the song with a somewhat medieval feel. Superstition and the medieval era are both hinted at in John Keats’ faith in beauty. He can look for it in catcalls, wood, shadows, flowers, art, and even the Greek tradition. He is a seductive admirer of beauty.

His compendiums’ senses are immediately affected by his poetry. He believed that beauty is timeless and always engages all five senses. Indeed, the poet enriches his poetry with sensual beauty amid times of anxiety, loss, suffering, and misery. Given that “Hyperion” is a depressing and sinister song, Keats cannot help but address beauty when he writes, “A piece of beauty is a delight eternally”. As a result, these two poems have a medievalist aesthetic. “The Eve of St. Agnes” contains the outward abundance of color and picturesqueness that Scott

found so appealing in the Middle Ages, while “The Eve of St. Mark” exhibits the medieval beauty and spiritual meaning of church liturgy.

### Conclusion

The poetry of John Keats serves as a model for upcoming romantic authors. He disregarded classical thinking and favored romanticism. In English literature, Keats is regarded as a romantic poet. John Keats’ faith is beauty. He can look for it in catcalls, wood, shadows, flowers, art, and even the Greek tradition. He is a seductive admirer of beauty. His readers’ senses are immediately affected by his poems. He believed that beauty is timeless and always engages all five senses. Indeed, he adds sensual beauty to his poems by expressing fears, grieving, aches, and bummers. Given that “Hyperion” is a depressing and sinister poem, Keats cannot help but emphasize beauty when he says: Keats discussed almost all facets of romantic poetry, including the glimmer of passion, love of nature, beauty, and the supernatural. Romantic poetry depicts the realm of fantasies rather than reality. Insofar as he is the most escapist of all poets, Keats is the most romantic. Keats looks for a way out of the past. Both the magnificence and splendor of the Middle Ages and the ancient Greeks capture his mind. All three of Endymion, Hyperion, and Lamia are classical themes with a romantic flair. “The Eve of St. Agnes”, “Isabella”, and “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” are all medieval works. In order to escape the harsh truths of the present, Keats turns to history. Keats writes in a romantic manner. With their musical influx in lengthy stanzas, Keats’ odes stand out as exceptional examples of romantic poetry. He is one of the greatest sonneteers in the English language. Keats was a real romantic—not in the stereotypical sense of coping with life's conceits.

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