

JOHN KEATS AS A SENSUOUS AND ROMANTIC POET

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ABSTRACT

John Keats was an English Romantic poet who lived during the 19th century. In his short-lived life he faced many ordeals and had to witness of death and suffering that shaped him as a poet and reflects in his work. It is in his poetry that many of the themes, motifs, and ideas that have since come to be associated with Romanticism came into full fruition. Keats' is development of ideas commonly associated with the core philosophical tenets of Romanticism is shown to be pervasively evident in the following poems: Endymion, Ode on a Grecian Urn, and Ode on a Nightingale Etc.

Keywords: Romanticism, Sensuous, Beauty, Ode, Nature.

Introduction

Keats uses various poetic techniques and themes to emphasize these ideas of romanticism the "the strange, the sensual and the romantic". These themes and techniques are the back bone of the Ode's which allow the reader to feel and use their imagination which was the main reason Keats wrote in his poems. Although his poem were not generally well received by critics during his lifetime, his reputation grew after his death, and by the end of the 19th century, he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets. He had a significant influence on a diverse range of poets and writers. Jorge Luis Borges stated that his first encounter with Keats' work was the most significant literary experience of his life.

Every romantic poet has his own writing style. Romantic poetry has many factors. It is on the poet which ingredient he prefers the most. Some poets prefer nature, some support escapism, and others believe in supernatural elements. Poet John Keats is also not different from others in this regard as he and other romantic poets of his era also critically evaluate these fundamentals of romantic poetry. Every poem of John Keats deals with problems of his own. His poetry is objective. It is neither for the sake of criticism nor to apprise the people of any society. He gives neither any message nor does advise to his readers. His poetry lacks morality. His words are not sarcastic. He does poetry for the sake of poetry only. John Keats, hence, is considered as the purest poet in the history of English Literature.

Romanticism is a movement in literature and the fine arts, beginning in the early nineteenth century that stressed personal emotion, free play of the imagination, and freedom from rules of form.

John Keats was one of the Trio-younger romantic poets v/s Shelley, Byron and himself. His odes are the most touching. He blossomed early and died young. Keats is noted for the indulging luxuriance of his imagery, but at the same time, he developed self-discipline in both feelings and craftsmanship. Keats believed in the importance of Sensation, but for him, Sensation was the path of the knowledge of reality. All of his odes stand apart as the best of all with its Sensuousness and richness of imagination. It is the most perfect and shortest that is "Ode to autumn" other he wrote ode on "Grecian Urn", "Ode to Psyche", and many like ode to a Nightingale, Ode on Melancholy, and many.

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- **Sensuousness:** Means something that has to do with our five senses. *Sensuousness* is that trait of *poetry* which influences our five senses i.e., hearing, seeing, touching, smelling and tasting. *Sensuous poetry* appeals to our senses.
- **As a Romantic Poet:** In “*Ode to Autumn*,” I do agree with this statement however I do feel there are some far more important and more widely used romantic ideals in his poems than the strange and the dream however sensual is a very important feature that runs through all of his Odes whether it is describing beauty of art in Urn or nature in Autumn he uses sensual language in all of his Odes and that is the main thing that makes the reader ask questions. John Keats used language, technique and style that Romantic Movement required in poetry.
- **As a Sensuous Poet:** Keats uses incredibly sensual language to illustrate how he is feeling and what he is imagining which gives the odes a sensual feeling of being alive. In Keats’ “*Ode to Autumn*” he is using a large amount of sensual language to try and take us to the place in his mind, his choice of words are hugely important for making Autumn a sensual Ode. His poetry makes us hear, see, smell, taste and touch the object he describes.

The poetry of Keats is characterized by ‘sensual’ uses of language. The sensuousness of Keats is a striking characteristic of his entire poetry. All his poems including his great odes contain rich sensual appeal. The odes, which represent the highest poetic achievement of Keats, are replete with sensual pictures. Now, we will discuss his sensuousness with examples of his various Odes and poems in detail.

‘Ode to Nightingale’

“Ode to Nightingale” is one of the most remarkable poems of sensuousness. In the second stanza of this ode, there is a description of the gustatory sensation of drinking wine. There are references to the visual and auditory senses too. The poet also paints the picture of a drunken whose mouth is purple stained because of the red wine he has drunk:

“With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth,”

In ‘*Ode on a Grecian Urn*’ Keats’ senses reflected:

Heard Melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter,
Therefore, yet soft pipe play on,
Not for the sensual ear, but more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone

Here John Keats describes the sense of hearing. The speaker is tempted by the eternal newness of the piper’s unheard song. Here in these lines shows that Keats had a unique gift of communicating with senses. The sense in his poetry is so deep that Louis MacNeice calls him “Sensual Mystic.”

Keats heard a Nightingale’s song in the garden and compose a poem ‘Ode to the Nightingale’ to inspire. The most sensual odes of him when heard the song of a Nightingale:-

The happy Queen-Moon on her throne
Clustered around her starry fays
But there is no light.....

Beauty was the creed of Keats, so he escapes in to the world of beauty away from the work- a day world of weariness. He says:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty.....

In the sense of sight John Keats also describes beauty and says:

Her hair was long, her foot was light
And her eyes were wild.....

In the sense of touch he says in his poem ‘*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*’:-

The sedge is withered from the lake
And no birds sing.

In the sense of Smell Keats describe beauty of Nature:

I can't see what flowers are at my feet
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet.

The best example of his sensuousness can be seen in his 'Ode to Autumn'

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;

Conclusion

Keats always selects the objects of his description and imagery with a keen eye on their sensuous appeal. This sensuousness is the principal charm of his poetry. A general recognition of this quality leads to the consensus that Keats's poetry is particularly successful in depicting, representing or conveying 'reality' or experience that his poetic language displays a kind of 'solidity' or concreteness capable of convincing the reader of the reality of what it communicates and persuading him, almost, to imagine that he is literally perceiving the objects and the experience that the verse describe.

In this way John Keats is a well-known poet of Romanticism and sensuous poet because each sense reflects in his near about all poems. Poetry comes to him as "**Joy wrought in sensation.**" In Odes, sonnets or in Narrative poetry, Keats is richly sensuous. His sensuousness is not only delicate and delicious but also aesthetic and tasteful. He had lived, he had loved and he had seen death, but as Keats had wished "**Here lies one whose name was writ in water**" to be written on his tombstone. It can be considered true that "**A poet is not at all poetical. He is the most un-poetical thing in existence. He has no identity.**"

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