



Concept of Aestheticism and Death-An overview of John Keats's Poetic Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

John Keats the worshiper of beauty and nature used art and death in his major poems including odes. He lived a short span of life but he was a source of inspiration to so many writers and also leading poet of such writers. His poetic philosophy is based on life and art showing the theme of eternity. Here we are trying to trace the concept of art and death in Keats's poetry. In romantic age so many poets like Wordsworth, Shelly, Byron, Coleridge, John Keats overcomes with the question of death, art, Life and nature in the thick and thin of humanities' life experiences. My paper deals with the concept of Death Art and Aestheticism in poetry of John Keats.

Keywords: Death, Destruction, Aestheticism, Negative capability

INTRODUCTION

Among all the Romantic writers, Keats unfortunately had very short span of life. Larger span of life, however, is no actual proof of lasting literature. Keats achieved in twenty six years what others could not do in their whole life. Keats, who was greatly inspired by Greek art, culture and mythology and by Elizabethan poets, especially Spenser, is said to be the most romantic of all the romanticists. John Keats lived a very short life marred by a tragedy. His father died in 1804 and his mother died six years later in the year when Keats left school. His brother Tom died of disease of tuberculosis and his other brother, George, departed to seek his fortune in America. Early in his life, before the death of Tom, he himself suffers the symptoms of the same deadly disease i.e. tuberculosis. In addition to that, his financial condition was worse and he failed in the field of love. Besieged by family loss would have made Keats more susceptible to gaining an acute sensitive mindset against the outside world. This sensitivity may explain his hyper ability to detect beauty and art everywhere around him in spite of his tragic short life. Beauty, for him, is a highest religion and an aim he was seeking throughout his miserable tragic life. We know that Keats conquered death by going deep in his poetry we finally came to the conclusion that Keats was not fearing about death but death itself have become a thing of insignificance.

NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

Keats is said to be the most romantic of all the romanticists because his poetry has salient features distinguishing him among other romantic poets. First of all he is a pure romantic poet. He writes poetry for the sake of poetry. He believes in art for art's sake. He does not write poetry for any palpable design or any propaganda. His major concern is to give pleasure. It means that his chief concern is pleasure. Whereas some other romantics have been writing poetry for the propagation of their objectives as Wordsworth and Shelley, who were in the favor of French Revolution, Keats is least concern with the social issues of life. Love for nature is the chief characteristic of all the romantics. Keats also loves nature; but he loves nature for the sake of nature. He does not give any theory or ideology about nature. He only admires the beauty of nature. But on the other hand, Wordsworth spiritualizes nature, Coleridge finds some supernatural elements in nature, Shelley intellectualizes nature and Byron is interested in the vigorous aspects of nature. Keats was also Hellenistic like all romantics. He was inspired Hellenism. Hellenism was the soul of his poetry. There are many Hellenistic features in his poetry such as his Greek instinct, his love for Greek literature, his love for Greek sculpture and art, his Greek temperament, and his love for beauty and the touch of fatalism and tragedy. Even his attitude of melancholy is also Hellenistic.

Keats is a sensuous poet too. It means that he writes his poetry with his penta senses. We do not only enjoy his poetry but rather we can taste, touch, see and hear all the images presented in his poetry. We enjoy his poetry with our five senses. The whole of our body is involved when reading him.

CONCEPT OF AESTHETICISM BY KEATS

Aesthetics is a discipline which deals with the concept of beauty. The Online Oxford Dictionary defines aesthetics as something which is "concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty" Beauty, for him, is a highest religion and an aim he was seeking throughout his miserable tragic life. John Keats's firm faith in the fact that "beauty is truth", leads him, unconsciously, to adopt this fact throughout his verse. And it is this faith that

characterizes his sweetest poetic production in English literature. If Coleridge delivers his Romanticism through supernaturalism; Keats gifts his Romanticism to us by means of beauty i.e. via aesthetic trajectory. For Keats, beauty is the moving spirit of both life and arts; but his aware of the concept of beauty can be interpreted differently. Mr. Ford interprets Keats' conception of beauty from the sensuous point of view. For him, Keats' chief poems celebrate sensuous beauty and sexual love whereas Wasserman, Murry and Bradley find ideal beauty in Keats' poems and other works. In fact, Keats seems to glorify both sensuous and ideal beauty because even normal things that have zero effect on normal people can easily thrilled Keats and fill his heart with aesthetic pleasure. Keats' friend, Hydon, comments on Keats's attraction to everything beautiful and states: "The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the Sun, seemed to make his nature tremble; then his eyes flashed, his cheeks glowed, and his mouth quivered."¹ Not only do normal things affect Keats; but even things that are considered disagreeable by others can affect Keats too. For example, the season of autumn, whose beauty has been ignored by majority of people, arouses a deep aesthetic pleasure overwhelms every single sense of Keats who considers it a golden season of golden mists and fruitfulness mentioned in his ode (ode to autumn). Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun; Conspiring with him how to load and bless With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run; To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees, And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core; In spite of some critics' claim that Keats celebrates physical beauty in his earliest poetic phase whereas spiritual beauty has been celebrated by him in his mature poetic phase; it seems that Keats worships beauty in both phases. In other words, he glorifies ideal beauty in his early poetic phase too, for example in *The Hyperion: A Vision* he admires beauty which is a form of might: For it's the eternal law that first in Beauty should be first in might. Keats focuses on how experiencing beauty gives meaning and value to life. In *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Ed Friedlander thinks that Keats seems to be telling his readers about so nothing that may have happened, or may happen someday, to them. They discover something that they think they really like. They understand it, but they are sure it is the best thing that is ever happened to them. They are thrilled and focus on y do not really it to give in to the beauty and richness and pleasure, and let it overwhelm them. Then the pleasure is gone. Far more than a normal let down, the experience has left them crippled emotionally. At least for an experience. And it remains an important part of who they feel that they are 2. while, they do not talk about regretting² Keats considers both beauty and true imagination that leads to beauty, the ultimate truth. Consequently, true imagination ca one o f his letters: "What imagination sizes as beauty must be truth, whether it existed before or not."³ Not only can beauty be a form of beauty. Keats wrote it is also power as Keats declares in *The Hyperion: The Vision*. In fact, he worships and glorifies beauty in all its forms and aspects whether sensuous and physical or ideal and spiritual. It is the ultimate truth and the full power; it is Keats' religion and faith, the spirit of his life and the style that dominates his poetic language. Thus, Keats' conception of beauty can be defined as follows: It is the religion, the faith and the style that stands as a spectrum involves the different shades of all sensuous charm and spiritual values. These aspects i.e. Truth, power, imagination,

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