

# A Post-Modern Perspective to John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"

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## ABSTRACT:

This paper basically centers round both traditional and postmodern approach found in John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale". As a post-modern reader the more emphasis has gone to the critical outlook on postmodern theme of the poem. Actually the poem preaches the theme of mortality and transience in contrast of immortality. But the poem may be taken as the source of inter-textuality, hegemony culture, psychoanalysis theory, eco-criticism etc. The whole poem is based on the technique of negative capability. In fact, the poem is a passport to postmodern culture of mind and intelligence.

## KEY WORDS:

Post-modern, inter-textuality, hegemony, psycho-analysis theory, eco-criticism, mind and intelligence.

John Keats is a paragon of romantics. His appearance on the stage of romantic revival creates a revolutionary movement in the paradigm of thought and style of literature. Though he died young, but his short-lived span of life left so many so many exciting and influential lyrical poems which are not only reflections of the era of romantic revival but they directly enter into the very core of the heart of modern readers. His poems have a heart shaking demand to the modern readers and also to post-modern readers

John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" which is the main focus of my researchable paper is nothing but a text of eliciting the great philosophy of life. It is a record of philosophical and reflective theme of the life --- one cannot escape death or one cannot embrace the life of romance and beauty forever. He himself says "fancy cannot cheat so well". Led by humanism, this poem, though, is categorized by subjectivity of the poet but it has a tinge of objectivity. From the very beginning of the poem to the last, we have an idea that the poem is a profound record of Keats's emotional journey towards the adventurous climax of life. The plot of the poem is developed through the conflict created by the contrast of thematic concerns --- mortality and immortality, permanence and impermanence, temporalism

and transcendentalism. The bird, nightingale has been presented as a symbol of immortality in the cage of mortality. Thus the poem traditionally or conventionally presents the theme of mortality or transience. It propagates the idea that no man can escape the stern reality of life. And if we dive into the very depth of the text, we can easily dissect the poem in a postmodern perspective. With the demand of the postmodern readers the text of the poem "Ode to a nightingale" may be interpreted with the idea of intertextuality, eco-criticism, psycho-analysis theory, hegemonic culture and the idea of pathos of life. The plot of the text is a great and rhythmic exploration of modern and post-modern intellectual mood. Just like "Ode to a Grecian Urn", "Ode to a nightingale" is the pathway of freeing the poet himself from this world of change by identifying with the art. Here Keats himself says that he is blended with the thorns of life. The world is too much with him. Extreme pathos of life has been exposed out from the poem "ode to a nightingale". He himself says that in this world youths grow weak and die a premature death. "Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes" or here new love dies tomorrow---all these metamorphosis is the very basic form of Keats's extreme pathos of life.

The poet himself is very much crazy to leave this world in order to protect his bereaved soul. On the other hand in respect

of the term intertextuality, we may say that the shaping of the meaning of the text "Ode to a nightingale" has been made with the help by another text. It is a stylish way of talking the meaning. In the poem we may take the reference of Ruth as a text by which the modern reader can have a influential meaning to go into the very core of heart of the text in both by romantic and modern meaning. Besides, the poem has so many more allusions, references from another texts as "Ithaca", "Dryads", "Flora", "blushful Hippocrene", etc. which intellectually provide another taste of the other texts to mould the aesthetic value of the meaning. Along with it, we may interpret the poem according to psychoanalysis theory. To say this, we must say that in the poem we have found the ideal John Keats has turned into moral John Keats. The fact is that the poet wanted to be Ideal transporting himself into the world of romance and beauty. It is the function of ID. Yes, being led by the ID, he wanted to have ultimate pleasure in the form of death but there appears EGO with a conflict that whether it is really possible to stay in the world of idealism or not. His rational self-knocks at his mind. Then his Super-Ego self becomes prominent and being moral he hurls back to the stern reality of life. Thus behind the action of the poem there always continues the function of unconscious self of his psyche.

Cultural Hegemony prevails over the poem "Ode to a Nightingale". The

postmodern demand of reading is the outcome of it. Through the close reading of the text, we may cite that from the very opening stanza to onwards in the poem and in most of the part of the poem there feels a dominance of ideal culture over the realistic culture. All the statements in most of the part of the poem regarding the poet's ultimate desire are basically romantic illusions and he becomes able to come out from these illusions at the very end of the poem with a realistic approach of life. In this way we have an idea of hegemonic culture in the form of dominance of ideal power of mind. On the other hand, my post-modern approach of reading of the poem helps me to grasp the knowledge of the nature of Eco-criticism. Eco-criticism basically demands the aesthetic value of nature in life. John Keats in "Ode to a Nightingale" embraces the love towards nature. Keats saw the secret of creative genius as an exquisitely purged sympathy with nature. Keats infused most of his poetry with the apprehension that nature and aesthetic creativity are the progressive moment of life. In the poem "Ode to a Nightingale" he basically focuses that nature plays a vital role in the comprehension of his aesthetic ambitions and achievements. Unlike Coleridge who apprehended nature by his pantheistic and monistic dimension he is in belief that being can be seen critically as a constructive deferral of spiritual idealism.

"Ode to a Nightingale" accelerates the movement of romanticism. Here John Keats emphasizes over the value of nature. The beauties of nature, individual untaught genius, spontaneity and emotion are greatly recorded in the cultural plot of the poem. The socio-political contexts and artistic reasons provide the emphatic development of and influential proposal to aesthetic movement. It is right that his is sensual writing which has also been reflected in the poem. Through this sensual writing he has attempted to employ the major themes of earlier Romantic poets like urge for freedom from earlier bondage, love for nature and the significance of emotions and beauty. It is noteworthy that the poem "Ode to a Nightingale" depicts in the form of a mixed picture of idealism, hope and faith on one hand and doubt and despair on the other hand.

Yes, the poem has a great appeal to modern mind and psyche. The theme and language borrowed from the Romantic Movement are the cultural and philosophical revolutions and constructions of postmodern shape and form in the poem "Ode to a nightingale". Keats's genius to be a natural disposition is not something to be earned through hard work and reason. His poem is the creation of its own rules. His self of imagination is an anticipating principle of mind. It gives concrete form to an aesthetic idea. It creates another aspect of postmodern social and cultural and political scope. Postmodern society demands a utopian

world free from fever and fret, free from suffering and oppression and absolute freedom from restrictions, corruptions and disintegration of mind. All the modern movements after First World War and Second World War which basically preach the idea of intellectual contradiction and effective self-consciousness commonly inspire aggressive and violent principles of artistic domain of art. John Keats, in "Ode to a Nightingale" does this maintaining dramatic and absolute formulae of ideology.

To John Keats, poetry is the picture of life. In his letters he expressed the view that the poet should possess what he called "negative capability". It is the ability by which the poet gives up his personal identity and shares the identity of the objects he is attempting to describe. Here in the poem "Ode to a Nightingale" the poet gives up his personal identity and shares the identity of the bird, Nightingale. Actually he does it in order to retire himself from this suffering world and to share the world of romance and beauty. He himself says: "I mean 'Negative Capability', that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason". Yes, in the poem, Keats may be taken to be a figure engrossed embracing the chaos and suffering of the postmodern world. He celebrates it rather than rejects.

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