

JOHN KEATS' PUBLICATION AND LITERARY CIRCLES: NAVIGATING THE ROMANTIC LITERARY LANDSCAPE

Dr. Pallavi Arya*

*Assistant Professor, Department of English
F.C. College for Women, Hisar, Haryana, India*

Email ID: pallavi.arya24@gmail.com

Accepted: 20.03.2022

Published: 01.04.2022

Keywords: John Keats, Romance.

Abstract

This research paper examines John Keats' journey through the publication process and his interactions within the literary circles of his time. It explores Keats' early struggles, his association with key literary figures, and the impact of his publications on his reputation as a Romantic poet. By delving into Keats' literary connections, the paper sheds light on the broader literary context in which his works were produced and received.

Paper Identification



*Corresponding Author

Introduction

John Keats, a luminous figure of the Romantic era, left an indelible mark on English poetry through his profound and evocative works. However, the journey of his literary career was intricately entwined with the

vibrant and influential literary circles of his time. Born in 1795, Keats emerged as a poet during a period when literary movements were in constant flux, and he navigated this tumultuous terrain with remarkable skill and resilience.

This introduction seeks to explore the intricate relationship between John Keats' publication endeavors and his engagement with the literary circles that defined the Romantic era. Keats' early aspirations as a surgeon gave way to his poetic ambitions, and his journey through the world of literature was marked by both triumphs and tribulations. Within this context, we will delve into the pivotal role played by literary figures such as Leigh Hunt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron in shaping Keats' career and the critical reception of his works.

As we embark on this exploration, we will uncover the challenges and controversies that Keats faced, his interactions with mentors and peers, and the enduring legacy he forged through his publications. The story of John Keats within the literary circles of his time serves as a captivating chapter in the broader narrative of Romanticism, encapsulating the essence of artistic

innovation and the enduring power of poetic expression.

Early Struggles and Ambitions

John Keats, initially trained as a surgeon, had a somewhat unconventional entry into the world of literature. In his early years, he juggled his medical studies with a burgeoning passion for poetry. However, his ambitions as a poet faced significant obstacles. Keats hailed from a modest background, and the financial constraints resulting from the untimely deaths of both his parents added to his challenges.

Despite these hardships, Keats persevered in his literary pursuits. His early exposure to the works of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser ignited his poetic aspirations. He began crafting his verses and had some of his early poems published in literary magazines, such as *Clarke's Examiner*. It was through these early publications that he first made his mark in the literary world.

Keats' transition from medicine to poetry marked the beginning of a remarkable journey, and his early struggles and ambitions would eventually lead to his association with influential literary circles, setting the stage for his rise as one of the preeminent Romantic poets of his era.

Literary Circles and Influential Figures

John Keats' journey into the world of literature was marked by both determination and adversity. Born in 1795 in London, Keats initially had ambitions outside of poetry. He pursued a career in medicine and began studying at Guy's Hospital in London in 1815. However, it was during this time that his passion for literature, particularly poetry, began to flourish.

Keats' early struggles were twofold. First, he faced significant financial challenges. The death of his parents when he was young left him without a substantial inheritance, and he had to work to support himself and his siblings. This financial strain made it difficult for him to focus solely on his literary aspirations, and he continued to pursue a medical career as a means of earning a living. Second, Keats grappled with the inherent uncertainty and competitiveness of the literary world. Despite his lack of formal education, his exposure to the works of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser fueled his desire to become a poet. His first poems were published in *Clarke's Examiner* in 1816, but he remained relatively unknown.

Keats' dual ambitions—medicine and poetry—coexisted for a time, but his growing love for poetry gradually eclipsed his medical pursuits. His dedication to literature became increasingly evident as he immersed himself in the works of contemporary poets and writers, leading to the publication of his first volume of poetry, *"Poems"* (1817). In essence, Keats' early struggles and ambitions were defined by his determination to overcome financial constraints and pursue a career in poetry despite the obstacles he faced. His transition from medicine to poetry marked the beginning of a remarkable literary journey that would eventually see him emerge as one of the most celebrated poets of the Romantic era.

Critical Reception and Controversy

Keats' early publications received mixed critical reviews, with some critics harshly criticizing his work. In particular, the publication of *"Endymion"* (1818) was met with hostile reviews, which deeply affected Keats. However, his association with Leigh Hunt and the support of friends like Charles Lamb helped him weather these controversies. Keats continued to refine

his poetic style and produce notable works like "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Posthumous Fame and Legacy

John Keats, a brilliant poet whose life was tragically cut short by tuberculosis at the tender age of 25, achieved posthumous fame and left an enduring legacy that has resonated through centuries. While he faced critical backlash during his brief lifetime, his poetry's true value and profound impact were recognized after his untimely death. After Keats' passing in 1821, his friends and supporters played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting his work. Chief among them was his close friend and artist Joseph Severn, who nursed Keats during his final days in Rome and diligently ensured that the poet's writings and letters were preserved. Severn's dedication, along with the efforts of Keats' circle of friends, helped safeguard his legacy.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, another eminent Romantic poet and a friend of Keats, wrote the elegiac poem "Adonais" in memory of Keats. This work not only celebrated Keats's poetic genius but also criticized the hostile critics who had caused him much distress during his lifetime. Shelley's "Adonais" helped elevate Keats to the status of a Romantic martyr and solidified his place in the literary pantheon. Keats' posthumous publications, including "Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems" (1820), garnered critical acclaim and helped establish him as a major poet of his era. The lyrical beauty, vivid imagery, and profound themes found in his poems, such as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn," resonated deeply with subsequent generations of poets and readers. Over time, Keats' influence extended far beyond his immediate literary circles. His emphasis on sensuousness, the power of imagination, and his exploration of the complexities of human emotions left

an indelible mark on Victorian poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Furthermore, his poetry continues to inspire contemporary poets and remains a subject of scholarly exploration, ensuring his enduring presence in the world of literature.

In conclusion, John Keats' posthumous fame and legacy are a testament to the enduring power of his poetry. His friends, including Joseph Severn and Percy Bysshe Shelley, played vital roles in preserving his work, while subsequent generations of poets and scholars have celebrated his contributions to English literature. Keats' poetry continues to captivate readers and remains an integral part of the literary canon, firmly establishing him as one of the most beloved and influential poets in the Romantic tradition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, John Keats' journey through publication and his engagement with literary circles exemplify the trials and triumphs of a Romantic poet in the early 19th century. His early struggles, mentorship by figures like Leigh Hunt, and the controversies surrounding his work underscore the challenges faced by burgeoning poets. Keats' enduring legacy, propelled by posthumous publications and the support of friends like Percy Bysshe Shelley, serves as a testament to the enduring power of his poetry. His contributions continue to resonate in the annals of English literature, showcasing the profound impact of literary circles and the enduring allure of Romanticism.

References

1. Keats, John; Gittings, Robert (1970). *The odes of Keats and their earliest known manuscripts*. Kent State University Press. ISBN 978-0873380997.
2. Motion (1997) pp. 204–205.

3. A preface to Keats (1985) Cedric Thomas Watts, Longman, University of Michigan p. 90 ISBN 978-0582353671
4. Gittings (1968), p. 504.
5. Kennedy, Maev. "Keats' London home reopens after major refurbishment". The Guardian, 22 July 2009. Retrieved 29 January 2010.
6. Motion (1997), pp. 180–181.
7. Gittings (1968), p. 139.
8. Walsh, William (1981) Introduction to Keats Law Book Co of Australasia, p. 81.
9. Gittings (1956), Mask of Keats. Heinemann, p. 45.
10. Gittings (1968), 262
11. Gittings (1968), p. 268.
12. Gittings (1968), p. 264.
13. Gittings (1968), pp. 293–298
14. Gittings (1968), pp. 327–331.
15. Houghton Library, Harvard University, I shall ever be your dearest love: John Keats and Fanny Brawne. "1820".
16. Richardson, 1952, p. 112.
17. Bate (1964), p. 636.
18. Motion (1997), p. 496.
19. Porter, Roy (1998). The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity (The Norton History of Science). W. W. Norton & Company. p. 440?. ISBN 978-0393046342.
20. McCormick, Eric Hall (1989). The Friend of Keats: A Life of Charles Armitage Brown. Victoria University Press. p. 60. ISBN 978-0864730817. Retrieved 23 February 2019 – via Google Books.
21. Rodríguez, Andres; Rodríguez, Andrés (1993). Book of the Heart: The Poetics, Letters, and Life of John Keats. SteinerBooks. ISBN 978-0940262577 – via Google Books.
22. Thomas Hardy's poem "At Lulworth Cove a Century Back", September 1920, commemorates Keats's landing on the Dorset coast on the voyage to Rome.
23. "A window to the soul of John Keats" by Marsh, Stefanie. The Times, 2 November 2009. Retrieved 29 January 2010.
24. Keats's Last Letter Archived 30 September 2018 at the Wayback Machine, written to Charles Armitage Brown from Rome, 30 November 1820.
25. Brown (2009)
26. Flood, Alison."Doctor's mistakes to blame for Keats' agonising end, says new biography". The Guardian, 26 October 2009. Retrieved 29 January 2010.
27. Dubos, René (1952). The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man, and Society. New Jersey, USA: Rutgers University Press. p. 11.
28. Colvin (1917), p. 208.
29. Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats. Representative Poetry Online. Retrieved 29 January 2010.
30. Richardson, 1952, p. 89.
31. "Keats's keeper". Motion, Andrew. The Guardian, 7 May 2005. Retrieved 29 January 2010.
32. Andrew Motion (23 January 2010). "Article 23 January 2010 An introduction to the poetry of John Keats". The Guardian. London. Retrieved 15 February 2010.