

The power of poetry is not in its literal, but in its implied; its subjective nature means each person can find their own implications. Romanticism has always held that power and will be venerated as great literature for years to come. Yet century old poetry will always merit its own criticism, and modern readers must ask themselves why archaic literature still offers us relatability today. My argument is that this great epoch best captures the complexity of human emotion: the Romantics have never been more relevant.

The Romantic poets employed a subjective vision throughout their work as a means of social therapy. This compassionate understanding of psychology is imperative in 2022 and renders this literary theme eternally relevant. Take, for example, 'Ode to a Nightingale' by John Keats, addressing a bird for its obliviousness to human suffering. Keat's poetic imagination is highly decisive in disparaging the effects of transcendence which holds great psychological significance for modern readers as this attitude reveals that satisfaction from experiences ameliorates our everyday lives. Whilst additionally highlighting the immortality and power of nature, this prominent motif of Romantic poetry has become extremely important today, as many struggle to understand and relate to the influential force of the natural world. Despite being written in an age of consumption, Romantic poetry through its concentration on the individual and his psyche can make us experience catharsis; it is both lyrical and intuitive in a powerful way.

The Romantics are not only eternally relevant, they are the ground that we walk on as writers, poets or readers: analysing this proficient writing enhances our own. Often described as a form of meta poem, 'Ode to a Nightingale' employs a myriad of literary devices intended to leave readers with a higher capability of intellectual and creative thought. This concept of educational poetry is incredibly modern, yet it also renders archaic poetry applicable to modern readers, primarily as a means of bettering our intellectual understanding. Throughout 'Ode to a Nightingale,' language is employed varyingly to create a rigid dichotomy between the vitality of the meeting and the sluggish monotony of language. This tension between the transcendent and mundane could be considered emblematic of the complexity of human emotion. From the abrupt opening line 'My heart aches,' we observe this sense of subjectivity, perhaps intended to teach centuries of poets the importance of embracing one's character in writing. This amalgamation of parallelism and anaphora worded with the distinct verbal economy of poetry leads to a sophisticated presentation of one of Keat's most personal Odes, enlightening our poetic abilities.

In 2022, with our climate and political issues worsening every day; we need to find a way to live and communicate in the Romantic style. Though some consider the motifs of Romantic poetry to be

anachronistic and unrelatable to modern readers, they are allegories for social and political expression. Take for example, the Keatsian rhetoric of harvesting in 'To Autumn', which many argue could be read as a political discourse and self-description of poetry writing. This interdisciplinary style of thinking relates to diplomatic jobs: poetry will forever be valuable outside of the literary circle. In our growing addiction to social media, we can perhaps rely on the poetry of the Romantics to rectify this concern. The turn to nature and away from realism captures the essence of Romantic poetry, as these poets documented the circuitous journey from innocence to experience: the critic René Wellek described the Romantics as 'a system of norms'¹, arguing for their importance in the founding of modern consciousness. William Wordsworth in his 'Lyrical Ballads' appealed to Nationalism, employing the pastoral semantic field to portray this. Throughout the pandemic, we have witnessed the mass exodus away from cities, as the British population idealises the idyllic lifestyle the countryside provides. Today, Wordsworth's poetry manifests itself in our ingrained tendency to turn to nature in times of difficulty. Likewise, much of Shelley's poetry appears to be searching for a form of hyper-reality, rendering his poetry an essential form of escapism. The seven-stanza ode 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' is open to various allegorical interpretations deriving from the poet's combination of political and scientific scepticism. Is it interestingly secular to Shelley's Christian culture as the strictly ordered form of a 'hymn' contrasts with these scientific allegations, giving way to a new form of artful irregularity. Does this not in turn encourage modern readers to challenge our ideological perceptions of religion and life itself? This cultivation of "Art for Art's sake" catalysed momentous change in the literary field forever.

It is indisputable that the Romantics were rebels of their time, attempting to rid themselves of Enlightenment attitudes. Shelley explores endless atypical doctrines for love, hinting at bisexuality and challenging the social constraints of the era. In the fable 'The Sensitive Plant', God is arguably feminised which is not only an incredibly progressive opinion for the 19th century, but for modern day Britain too. The poet goes on to abstractly and ambitiously frame the image of love, depicting the Garden of Eden as its supposed 'paradise', and discrediting the unprogressive biblical evangelism regarding homosexuality. Keats too was arguably a feminist for the time of writing: his intense fascination of the female as the focus for male desire in his letters implies his life to be an allegory for sexual uncertainty. The ballad 'La Bella Dame sans Merci' is suggested to be the divulgence of Keat's erotic policies, forever associating his celebrated poetry with sexual uncertainty, feminism and so many progressive opinions, rendering his

¹ THE CONCEPT OF "ROMANTICISM" IN LITERARY HISTORY. RENE WELLEK

poetry eternally relevant. Not only were the Romantics rebels of their epoch, but their poetry is memorable and meaningful.

The Romantics' commitment to the progressive amelioration of human enlightenment has made literature what it is today. Pining for liberty and radicalising social and political values are at the core of human desire. Of course, great poetry will always endure criticism, but Romanticism has never been more essential to our creative understanding.