

THE ROMANTIC PARALLELS BETWEEN WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND JOHN KEATS

Mudasir Ahmed¹

¹CRC Government Higher Secondary School Topneel, Doda, J&k, India.

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.58257/IJPREMS39863>

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the literary and thematic connections between two central figures of Romantic poetry, William Wordsworth and John Keats. By analysing their approaches to nature, imagination, and the sublime, the study highlights shared ideals, philosophical divergences, and the influence of Wordsworth on Keats. Despite their differences in temperament and poetic style, Wordsworth's meditative tone and Keats's sensual imagery reveal a shared commitment to exploring the human spirit and its relationship with the natural world.

Keywords: Romantic poetry, William Wordsworth, John Keats, natural world.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Romantic period (late 18th to mid-19th century) redefined poetry by emphasizing emotion, individualism, and a profound connection with nature. Wordsworth and Keats, though belonging to different generations of Romanticism, share overlapping themes while exhibiting distinctive poetic voices. Wordsworth, an early Romantic, offered a philosophical and contemplative view of nature as a moral guide. Keats, a later Romantic, emphasized the sensory experience of nature and the transient beauty of life. This paper explores these parallels and contrasts, shedding light on their shared Romantic ideals.

1. Nature as a Central Theme

Both poets revered nature, yet their depictions differ in focus.

1.1 Wordsworth's Vision of Nature

Wordsworth viewed nature as a moral teacher, a source of solace, and a medium to access the divine. His "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" demonstrates this belief, portraying nature as both a refuge and a guide: "For I have learned / To look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes / The still, sad music of humanity."

1.2 Keats's Sensory Celebration of Nature

Keats emphasized the sensory beauty of nature, treating it as a source of aesthetic pleasure. In "To Autumn," he celebrates the transient beauty of life through nature's imagery:

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, / Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun."

While Wordsworth seeks philosophical depth, Keats revels in sensory immediacy, yet both align in recognizing nature as an integral part of human experience.

2. The Role of Imagination and the Sublime

2.1 Wordsworth: Imagination as a Moral Force

For Wordsworth, imagination was intertwined with memory and moral reflection. His preface to *Lyrical Ballads* asserts poetry's role in expressing "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," shaped by thought and contemplation.

2.2 Keats: Imagination as Escapism

Keats's imagination was more escapist and celebratory of art's transformative power. "Ode to a Nightingale" exemplifies this:

"Away! away! for I will fly to thee, / Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, / But on the viewless wings of Poesy."

Despite differing applications, both poets elevate imagination as a means to transcend the ordinary and explore deeper truths.

3. Mortality and the Human Condition

3.1 Wordsworth: Reflection on Mortality

Wordsworth reflects on human mortality with serenity, often presenting it as a natural cycle intertwined with nature's permanence. His poetry seeks consolation in memory and continuity.

3.2 Keats: Awareness of Mortality's Fleetingness

Keats's preoccupation with death stems from his personal struggles with illness. In "When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be," he reveals a poignant awareness of life's brevity:

"When I have fears that I may cease to be / Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain."

Both poets grapple with mortality, yet Wordsworth leans toward acceptance, while Keats mourns the ephemeral nature of beauty and life.

4. Influence and Divergence

Keats admired Wordsworth's philosophy of nature, evident in his letters, but diverged in his poetic practice. While Wordsworth rooted his work in personal reflection and philosophical depth, Keats sought beauty for its own sake, as in his concept of negative capability, the ability to embrace uncertainty and ambiguity without seeking resolution.

2. CONCLUSION

Wordsworth and Keats, despite their generational and stylistic differences, exemplify the Romantic era's preoccupation with nature, imagination, and the human condition. Their works resonate with shared ideals while reflecting their unique poetic identities. Wordsworth's influence on Keats is undeniable, yet Keats extends Romanticism's boundaries by prioritizing aesthetic beauty and sensory immediacy. Together, they encapsulate the richness of Romantic poetry.

3. REFERENCES

- [1] Wordsworth, William. Lyrical Ballads.
- [2] Keats, John. Complete Poems and Selected Letters.
- [3] Abrams, M.H. The Mirror and the Lamp.
- [4] Bloom, Harold. The Visionary Company.
- [5] Roe, Nicholas. John Keats and the Culture of Dissent.