Poetry Evoking the Emotional Impact of Love

In what ways and for what purposes do Rumi’s and John Keats’ poems evoke the emotional impact of love?

English Candidate code

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# Introduction

In Rumi’s “Gone to the Unseen” and “Bittersweet” along with John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou” love is expressed through an array of techniques. In this essay, the expression of love for God and a higher power is being explored through the comparison of two poems and love for a significant other is being explored in the other two poems. There are multiple reasons why Rumi and Keats are being compared instead of two other poets.

First, both poets were writing in the same era although Rumi was located in Iran and Keats in England. Second, both poets have their own religion that they used to follow which might seem absurd to most people in today's society. Rumi grew up in a Sunni family his father, Baha Valad, occasionally did preaches at the local mosque. Both he and his father were firm believers in the revelations of the [Qur'an](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/texts/quran_1.shtml), but criticised the mere outwardly legal and ritual practice that was being promoted at the time.1 When looking at Keats it is evident that he did not

follow a certain religion. Keats felt that his whole life was a quest for transcendent truth; for him, this truth could be expressed only in terms of an intense, imaginative engagement with

sensuous beauty.2 Rumi’s poetry is originally written in Persian so this allows for a fair

comparison of the techniques used at the time in Iranian culture versus the ones in Western culture.

1 "Religions - Islam: Jalaluddin Rumi - BBC." 1 Sep. 2009, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/art/rumi_1.shtml>. Accessed 6 Oct. 2019. 2 "Keats' beliefs » John Keats, selected poems Study ... - Crossref-it."

<https://crossref-it.info/textguide/john-keats-selected-poems/40/2935>. Accessed 6 Oct. 2019.

Rumi is known around the world as an extremely religious poet who mainly focused on religious poets. Both poets took their favourite things about religion and decided to express their love and appreciation for God and this earth through the art of poetry.

When comparing their love lives it is clear that both poets did not have the best of luck when it came to having a happy ending. Rumi married the love of his life and his first wife Gowhar Khatun who sadly passed away a few years later. When his wife died, Rumi married again and had a son, Amir Alim Chalabi, and a daughter, Malakeh Khatun.3 Keats fell in love

with a woman named Frances Lindon, who he referred to as Fanny Brawne to protect her identity. The anonymous Mrs Lindon was, in fact, the mysterious, unnamed beloved of the now famous Keats.4 Although Keats was madly in love he didn’t get a chance to marry her due to his

life ending at only 25. It can be concluded that from their love life both poets had a lot to say about their relationships.

# Love for Religion/nature

## Rumi

The poem “Gone to the unseen” by Rumi depicts the emotional impact of the love for God exceptionally. This poem is written to express Rumi’s love for God in an attempt to display Gods power and significance. The central theme of this poem is prophet Muhhamed reaching God. There is a reoccuring motif of birds in this composition as the journey involves flying and leaving this earth behind, in this case they are also a symbol. Many cultures believe that they

3 "Rumi - Wikipedia." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumi>. Accessed 6 Oct. 2019.

4 "Fanny Brawne - EnglishHistory.net." 4 Feb. 2015, <https://englishhistory.net/keats/fanny-brawne/>.

Accessed 6 Oct. 2019.

symbolise eternal life; the link between heaven and earth.5 This is what is believed in Persian

culture as well and the reason Rumi used this motif.

The text is comprised of eleven stanzas with no particular meter or rhyme. It should be noted that the original has rhyming couplets throughout. At first the speaker is depicting the journey that the unknown addressee has taken. The stanza begins with “beating your wings and feathers” (Line 3). In this statement zoomorphism is used so the story could be told using vivid visual imagery. Visual imagery and metaphors in this poem are used so readers imagine the event therefore allowing them to feel the speakers emotions. Then he “broke free from this cage” (line 4), the “cage” is a metaphor for the world displaying the speakers dissatisfaction with the earth. Subsequently, the addressee is being compared to a “prized falcon” with a metaphor in order to express their importance. He “flew beyond space and time” (line 9), juxtaposition displays the similarity between time and space. The readers experience the thrill of flying beyond space and time. In this stanza Rumi conveys the pleasant emotions that he associates with believing in God and going to heaven.

The third and fourth stanza are very closely related as they both continue describing the journey with the use of vivid visual imagery alongside other literary devices. “Then came the scent of the rosegarden” (line 11), in this quote olfactory imagery is used since roses are a universal symbol for love. By refreshing this scent in the readers mind the positive emotions associated with giving and receiving roses is expressed. In the fourth stanza religious references start to appear. “Finally you joined the tavern of Eternity” (line 14), in this quote the words “finally” and “eternity” are capitalized causing the use of an oxymoron to be more clear.

5 "Bird Symbol \*\*\* - Signs & Symbols." 11 Jun. 2014, <http://www.signology.org/bird-symbol/>. Accessed 6 Oct. 2019.

He has “finally” reached “eternity” showing that there is no real end to this journey and his life. The oxymoron symbolizes reaching the start of the life that matters the one that lasts for eternity. It is conveying the feeling of accomplishment, as the journey has ended, as well as excitement for this new life.

A narrative shift finally occurs in the fifth stanza, the journey now ends and the appraisal of the addressee begins. In line 18 the speaker indicated that, “The phantom world gave you false signs”, this is symbolizing to the illusion of this world when in reality it is hell and the false signs are referring to the lies. He feels betrayed as the world displays a false image based on lies. The readers are informed that he has managed to reach “the land of truth”. The sixth stanza begins with, “You are now the sun -” (line 21), he is being equated to the sun with a metaphor. In this line the sun means the prophet, the word sun (with a different spelling) is the speaker's way of saying he is the son of God. This line indicates the extreme level of respect the speaker has for the addressee displaying the awareness of superiority. Sibilance, capitalization along with the exclamation mark in, “Yours is now the Soul of Souls!” (line 27), result in evoking the feeling of superiority as the addressee now controls all souls.

Once again in the eighth stanza, the motif of birds is evident to display the heart flying away. The first line states that, “The flowers flee from Autumn, but not you” (Line 32), alliteration grabs the readers attention and gives the line a more rhythmic flow. The use of alliteration creates a sense of attachment as the flowers flee while the addressee does not. The flowers are metaphorically fleeing as they are being personified and given capabilities that they do not endure. These elements combined successfully evoke the feeling of belonging while relating back to the motif of birds. By stimulating this emotion readers realize the significance of going to

heaven. In the second line, a rose (the addressee) is personified by being referred to as fearless. Claiming that loving God allows humans to reach eternal peace. Moving onto the final line “that grows amidst the freezing wind” (line 34), the speaker is using irony as flowers can not grow in the cold in order to highlighting strength. In the final stanza the wonderful impact of emotions associated with reaching heaven is successfully evoked in readers. The poem concludes with “In the Arms of the Beloved” (line 42), “Beloved” and “Arms” are capitalized to emphasize the value. Reaching this location causes the addressee to feel the best emotion possible for eternity.

## Keats

An example of Keats’ works about his love for God along with nature can be seen in

“Ode on a Grecian Urn”. The central theme in this poem is the underestimated beauty of nature and God’s creations. The main motif in this text is the urn, which on the surface is simply a piece of artwork but in this case it is representing the notion of eternity. The speaker is amused by the drawing on the urn since they will remain still with no change forever. There is an overpowering sense that the joy is timeless for those on the urn since they will never age and nothing will ever change.

This poem follows an ode-stanza structure, and it is metered in iambic pentameter. In the first line the urn is personified as it is metaphorically compared to a bride. This is expressing the innocence of the urn despite its age. “Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,” (line 2), in this line personification is used to state that the urn is not affected by time. The speaker is passionate towards these artifacts due to them being immortal which was expressed using the metaphors above.

After the fourth line in the stanza, there are seven searching questions where the speaker doesn’t know if the figures are God or mortals. Rhymes create unity as these questions are all in search of answers from God. “A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:” (line 4), here the use of a colon creates a pause while implying that there is a sweet tale to be told. “Of deities or mortals, or of both,” (Line 6), and then “What men or Gods are these?” (line 8). In this fragment , the speaker is using an alternant to provide a larger choice in order to possibly reach finality. The emotion being evoked is confusion as there seems to be a never ending search for answers. Not only does this cause indecision, it also creates tension due to not knowing.

Keats returns to the difference between art and nature in the second stanza while he contemplates the musicians carved on the urn. He states that, “heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ are sweeter” (line 11-12). On the surface Keats seems to be referring to the art but he is displaying the conflict between the real world and the world of art. The use of “but” creates a paradox presenting the opposite of what is normally believed. The speakers final criticism of the world of art is, “Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss” (line 17). Although ideal at first glance, the world of art does not contain emotions such as compassion that Keats is searching for. The word “love” is used several times in order to once again highlight the most significant difference between the world of art and the real world being the lack of love.

The comparison of the two worlds end in this poem with, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know” (line 49-50). The final message of this poem is that the world is carefully created by God as an Urn is by an artist and they both are filled with beauty. The significance of the real world is the ability for organisms to feel love

and compassion, emotions that others such as the drawings on the urn do not have the luxury of experiencing.

# Love for a significant other

## Rumi

The poem “Bittersweet” written by Rumi deals with the significant emotional impact of love and how it induces a different perception of the world. The word “bittersweet” is a juxtaposition and it successfully displays the ups and downs of love. The theme of love is expressed in a rather peculiar manner. There is a motif of being drunk which has a completely different meaning in this context. Rumi believes that the state of someone who is in love is the equivalent of them being drunk. This is not referring to the enjoyable aspect of drinking but rather the sense of confusion and being lost. The title of this text plays a major role in expressing the overall mood of the poem.

To start, it is important to note that Rumi along with other notable Persian poets at the time write in different tenses throughout a poem. In this case he shifts from past to present twice and finally ends with the future. The first line intrigues the readers, the short statement “In my hallucination” (line 1) is the beginning of a story that on the surface seems to be about hallucinations. The second line states “I saw my beloved’s flower garden”, the use of “my” implies that this is his personal and private affair, while the “flower garden” could be perceived as a symbol of purity. “In my vertigo, in my dizziness” (line 3) followed by “In my drunken haze” (Line 4) use repetition along with imagery to maintain the feeling of suspense. “In my” is repeated three times, to reinforce a sense of ownership and privacy. Imagery is used

expressing a hidden truth as a “drunken haze” is solely a state of confusion. By using these symbols Rumi is confusing readers as the intention of the text remains unclear. The emotional impacts of love are only starting to be revealed as the poems intentions are slowly uncovered. Writing poetry with a puzzling yet descriptive start plays a major role in Rumi’s poetry and is a stylistic feature that defines his writing. Using this approach at the start of a poem not only leaves the readers intrigued it allows them to focus solely on the emotions being expressed because the plot remains unclear.

In line eight the speaker refers to himself as “the spirit of love” (line 8) stating that “Now I am sober” (line 9). It seems as though the magical powers of love are gone, the purity and the imaginary universe are gone and the speakers left with reality. Then Rumi explains that he is left with “only the hangover” (line 10) and “the memory of love”(line 11). The use of “only” creates a sense of emptiness and signifies the painful reminiscent of love. In this stanza the painful aspect of love is discussed as the emotional impact of love is confusion. This is evoked by equating love and drunkness. The third stanza explores the feeling of desperation that the speaker is experiencing. He “yearns” for happiness, implying a deep craving for a feeling that was once in his life. The speaker then decides to “ask for help” (line 14), and finally ask for “mercy”. “I” is repeated three times and “yearn”, “ask” and “want” are closely related in meaning. When used together these techniques evoke the same sense of desperation that the speaker is experiencing in the readers.

From the start of the fourth stanza until the end of the poem the speaker changes to his love interest. The first line states “look at me and hear me” (line 17), sensory imagery show that the lover wants to be noticed. Later in the stanza it becomes clear that love never left but

instead he stopped noticing. The fifth stanza is saturated with repetition so that readers can truly feel the emotions being expressed. It begins with “I am your moon and your moonlight” (Line 20), there is a repetition of “moon”. The moon is a symbol of femininity and a waxing moon symbolizes purity, the moonlight also signifies the influence that she has as the light that shines is provided by her. The stanza continues with similar repetition and metaphors such as “flower” and “flower garden”. These repetitive symbols are used to express the speakers emotions in various ways. The speaker feels as though they can not survive without their significant other, with symbols Rumi evokes the impact of love for him.

The seventh and final stanza concludes with an impactful ending. Starting with “Oh sweet bitterness” (line 28) it is a modified repetition of the poems title. The oxymoron is displayed once again highlighting the ironic claim that bitterness would ever be sweet, but now the text has proven that it is possible. The final line states “I, too, have been covered with thorns” (line 31). This can be viewed as a reflection of when the love has ended. She is comparing herself to the rose but not the love aspect of it rather the pain. The original speaker is finally not alone and has someone who has experienced the same pain by his side. The emotional impact of love evoked in this case is the sense of safety.

## Keats

The poem “Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art” is a poem written by Keats with the major thematic subject being love. He uses a variety of literary devices along with techniques to portray his emotions towards his lover. Keats was in love with a married woman who was having an affair with him. Though she had told her children of her romance with Keats, and shown them her collection of his books and love letters, she had also made them promise

to never tell their father.6 This poem is a sonnet and it is organized in a quatrain. The main

thematic subjects in this sonnet are love, the beauty of a significant other along with isolation. The addressee (the bright star) is far away seemingly isolated and in need of compassion. In this case the star is Keats’ love interest and he also feels lonely. In this text, the poet mainly portrays the emotional impact of love through symbolism; visual imagery aids the symbols used. Such symbols were used to express loneliness and the lack of motivation to live without your significant other.

The first stanza begins with, “Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art” (line 1) In this line “Bright Star” is the extended metaphor for his love. The bright star is being referred to in a lyrical voice as the speaker is seeking for an ideal life where he was is as stable as it.

Personification is used when referring to the “eternal lids” as eyelids are a human feature, this makes the star seem more human-like therefore indirectly evoking a deeper sense of relatability. The use of metaphors in these first lines express the speakers passionate love towards his significant other. In the fourth line the star is referred to as a “sleepless eremite”, the word eremite means someone who is following Christianity and is in solitude. The “eremite” in this line is significant because it shows that his lover has the same religious beliefs as him and Keats believes that she is lonely like the star. As mentioned earlier Keats’ love interest had a family without him and it seems as though this is a desperate attempt to mask his loneliness by imagining that she is alone.

The second stanza is when Keats begins to incorporate the use of rhyming couplets. rhymes such as “task” and “mask” allow for a measured flow throughout the poem along with a

6 "Fanny Brawne - EnglishHistory.net." 4 Feb. 2015, <https://englishhistory.net/keats/fanny-brawne/>.

Accessed 6 Oct. 2019.

sense of closeness. The lyrical continuity makes reading the text more intriguing while adding an element of joy in turn evokes the emotion of love in the reader. “Of pure ablution round earth’s human shores” (line 6) in the following line love is portrayed as something of religious and sacred qualities, this elevates love and its quality. The use of “ablution” signifies that it is in some sense a cleansing. “Of snow upon the mountains and the moors” (line 8), snow implies purity as white symbolizes being pure. “Mountains and moors” are empty isolated places which symbolize the feeling of loneliness. In this stanza the speakers preception of love uncovers itself; to him love is a scared and religious occurrence. Visual imagery and metaphors allow readers to invision the depicted scenarios which most can relate to. This evokes the emotional impact that loves purity has on oneself.

The first direct implication of romance is visible in line nine “Pillow’d upon my fair love’s ripening breast”. The use of visual imagery when describing “the fair love’s” breast allows for the creation of this image in the reader's mind symbolizing warmth and comfort. “Awake forever in sweet unrest” (line 12) this line incorporates the use of an oxymoron as “sweet” and “unrest” are two opposing feelings. The emotional impact of love is being portrayed as unpredictable, showing that it can be positive or negative. It is clear that the speaker wants to remain in this ideal forever although it is clearly impossible.

Finally, the concluding rhyming couplet effectively summarize the purpose of the entire sonnet beautifully. “Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath” (line 13), the repetition of “still” shows that it is something he looks forward to. Keats uses alliteration in “tender-taken” this shows his of her romantically as well as archetypally. Finally, the most significant line, “and so live ever-or else swoon to death”. The speaker believes they should both live forever. He then

states that if it isn’t possible they should die together. In this line the true pain of love can be seen as he doesn’t want a life where she doesn’t exist and that death would be a better choice. This evokes the reader's emotions significantly as it is a very extreme way of portrays Keats’ love.

# Comparison

Before the comparison begins it is important to note that the poems written by Rumi are originally in Persian and many devices are lost in translation, and some devices used do not exist in the English language and are only evident in Persian poetry.

Starting with the poems about the love for religion, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “Gone to the Unseen”. “Gone to the unseen” is comprised of eleven stanzas with no particular meter or rhyme. It should be noted that the original has rhyming couplets throughout. The “Ode on a Grecian urn” follows an ode-stanza structure, and it is metered in iambic pentameter. From this, it can be concluded that both poets used some form of rhyming couplets.

Rumi uses visual imagery along with with similes and metaphors any chance he gets. Through the use of imagery, he conveys the emotional impact. Keats uses a somewhat similar technique he does use imagery but instead of a journey, the speaker is looking at an Urn. In “Gone to the Unseen” readers are taken through the process that the unknown addressee took to get to heaven and God. In “Ode on a Grecian Urn” the main is questioning why certain things are on an urn and what there is. When reading the two it is clear that both writers like to incorporate enjambment and caesural pauses in their work.

When looking at the expression of love for a significant other “Bittersweet” and “bright star would I was steadfast as thou art” will be compared. “bright star would I was steadfast as thou art” is a sonnet (a fourteen-line poem) and it is organized in a quatrain which is also known as four-lined stanzas. The poem consists of couplets and the rhyme scheme is as follows ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. “Bittersweet” is a 31 line poem with no particular rhyme scheme in English but the original has rhyming couplets throughout.

In Rumi’s poem through the use of many similes and metaphors, he is discussing how he is so affected by love that he felt like he was in a hallucination. In Keats’ case, he decides to describe and converse with a “bright star” that he sees. When comparing it is clear that both poets use rather unusual scenarios and express the emotional impact of love rather successfully. One difference that is important to note is Keats tends to end his poems by saying that he wishes both him and the addressee live forever or die together. When looking at Rumi’s work it seems that he normally writes to someone he honours very much and looks up to and never does he hope that the other person dies under any circumstance. The reason this contrast is important is that it shows that Keats believed the idea of death highlights his emotions while Rumi someone in the same time era didn't believe it helped his work.

# Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear that although both poets lived in the same era their location affected their stylistic choices. A prevalent technique is the use of visual imagery along with metaphors. This creates an image depicted by the poet in the readers mind allowing for the emotions to be evoked more successfully. This technique is used by both poets as it is very effective in relation to the impact of love as it can be described in numerous ways. The main

difference is the actual emotions being evoked. Rumi depicts love as something that can be painful yet beautiful; Keats focuses more on the beauty and positive aspects of love. In both cases it seems that the emotional impact of love is successfully evoked. The love for religion and God also differs slightly as Rumi is more focused on God while Keats focuses more on the wonders of nature. Overall, it is clear that the emotional impact of love is evoked using many similar techniques but there are still clear difference in their works.

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