

Topic → Romantic Poetry

Poet - John Keats

B.A. Part I (Hons) Paper II

Subject. ENGLISH.

Book - The Eve of St. Agnes.

The fusion of all these elements produces which quite different from any of them, and entirely Keats's own. Keats returns to first love, the spearman stanza and uses it triumphantly from the moments of the first atmospheric opening onward; the bitter chill and frozen Beadsman with his thumb fingers are described with extraordinary sympathy. In particular, the alexandrine at the end of each stanza is used with great effect.

and his weak spirit -
fails

To think how they may ache
in icy hoods and hails...
(11. 17-18)

~~And~~ A shielded scutcheon
blushed with blood of queens
and kings. (1. 216)

In the first example the whole
line sharpens to a point at
the word 'ache', which is the
centre of what went before
and what is to come after,
both grammatically and in its
place with in the line.

The Beadsmen is an
old man, celibate, lonely,
praying: he has a weak spirit
and is old (The joys of all
his life were said and sung)
and dying. And from the
opening onward, the action
is keenly cleverly narrowed
down to Madeline's room.
The moments which turn in
other direction, such as
the charming gesture

when Madeline helps Angela down the stairs, only to serve to emphasise the general forward movement towards the bedchamber, where Madeline says her prayers and addresses for her bed.

Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one (1.228) where the word 'warmed' not only captures the tacite sense of normally cold jewels but suggests the warm of life that is a part of Madeline herself.

The other connecting link between frost and fire is Angela, the pious servant who reluctantly agrees to conceal Post-physic in his lady chamber. Angela is her fumbling pieties is ~~so~~ obvious enough.

Porphyro is chosen for his purple-red colour implied by the name:

Sudden a thought came—
 like a full blown rose,
 Flashing his brow, and in
 his pained heart
 Made purple riot.

It is the thought of appearing to Madeline, and of the likely consummation. The name Madeline, in its root form of Magdalen, appears in the the cancelled stanza that comes between the stanzas VI and VII in one manuscript:

'Twas said in future word
 would there appear,
 Offering as sacrifice— all
 the dream—

Delicious food even to her lips
 brought near:

Vivands and wine and fruits

fine extreme,
Of relish: Then soft music
heard; and then ~~more~~
~~pleasures~~
More pleasures follow in
The dizzy stream
Palpable almost; Then
to awake again
to Warm in the virgin's morn,
no weeping Magdalen.

To be continued-

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Instruction to students -
The students are kindly
requested to read it three or
four times so that they will
able to understand the
poem and the unseen
passages in the examination.