

# [John one who is journeying towards the heavens.](https://assignbuster.com/john-one-who-is-journeying-towards-the-heavens/)

John Keats wrote a poem known as ‘ On First looking into Chapman’s Homer’. He was an English romanticpoet of the early 19th century known mostly for the use of sensualimagery within his popular series of odes. Though initially unpopular his poemsare now some of the most critically analysed of the romantic period.

‘ Keats daringand bold style earned him nothing but criticism from two of England’s morerevered publications, Blackwood’s Magazine and the Quarterly Review’ (Keats, 2018) this passage shows how popular poetry magazines at the time scorned hisfirst attempt at poetry. Sea Grapes by Derek Walcott is apoet from a completely different time. Walcott was born and raised in the WestIndies under the West Indies Federation, growing up during a time ofde-colonisation, he began to incorporate his feelings and emotions aboutcolonial rule into his literary works, this essay will aim to bridge to gapbetween there poetry and attempt to find common ground among centuries ofdifference. To begin, both employtropes and figures of speech throughout their poems, with a good example beingKeats with ‘ When a new planet swims into his ken’ (Keats, 1816) – perhaps referencingthe recent discovery of Uranus in 1781.

This is further reaffirmed with variouscritiques on it today ‘ Critics usually say that the “ new planet” to WilliamHerschel’s observation of Uranus in 1781’ (LOGAN, 2014) It is a common themewithin criticism that this is what he meant. This passage showcases his use figurativelanguage, an example being the incorporation of the word ‘ swims’ as it likensthe planet to a human being, one who is journeying towards the heavens. Languagelike this intrigues the reader to read on. Walcott providesmany examples himself of how fluent he is with the use of figures of speech, for example ‘ the sail which leans on light’ (Walcott, 1816: ln. 1) suggestinghow the journey of literary knowledge, a recurring theme within this poem, isled by the classics written in Greece.

With ‘ light’ being the classics, withdark being what occurred after that. This is in keeping with the themes Walcott portrays throughouthis own works, as he highlights the colonial brutality towards his culture as anegative thing, suggesting that he values his culture as if it were a form of wealth. He highlights this within his other poem ‘ AFar Cry from Africa’ (Walcott, 1962) in particular ‘ The salients of colonialpolicy. What is that to the white child hacked in bed? To savages, expendableas Jews?’ (Walcott, 1962, p.

8-10) This passage describes the racial unrestbetween the two cultures. From this we can see both poets employ imageryeffectively to highlight what they considered the issues of the day. Continuing, both employ the use of imagery throughout their poems. ‘ Much have I travell’din the realms of gold, and many goodly states and kingdoms seen’ (Keats, 1816: ln. 1) This idea of ‘ realms of gold’ brings a vivid image to mind of a rich landfull of promise and adventure, to which is he alludes to the discovery of atthe end of the poem with ‘ Silent, upon a peak in Darien’ which is a hill inPanama, within the Americas.  Thisopening line is an immediate introduction to Keats’ imagery as a writingtechnique, to help the reader, see what he is describing. ‘ Realms of gold’ (Keats, 1816) provides a very accurate, grand image to the readers mind; helping youvisualise a rather large quantity of gold within an area. ‘ Much have Itravelled’ (Keats, 1816) suggests a voyage to foreign lands, like Odysseus toTroy – In this case however he means the Americas.

Central America at thispoint was a major source gold for the Spanish, as the Spanish colonies wereplentiful with the resource and as such could be described as “ realms of gold.” In another link, the natives in these colonies were treated horrendously undercolonialism, something Walcott experienced first-hand. This highlights thecomparison that one of these poets developed their literary styles during theheight of colonialism in the early 19th century whilst the other developedand saw first-hand its decline around the 20th century. Keats usesthe Greek classics as examples and comparisons from which he compares his owntime to, which Walcott also does throughout his poem.

Later, Keats refers the Aegean Sea surrounding Greece with ‘ Round the western islandshave I been, which bards in fealty to Apollo hold’ (Keats, 1816: ln. 3-4)Through the use of the term ‘ western islands’ where Homers Odyssey would havetaken place; with the reference to the Greek god Apollo further supporting this. He’s recounting a voyage like the one described in the Odyssey, however hisvoyage is one likened to one of literary development and understanding, shown throughhis use of the phrase ‘ which bards in fealty to Apollo hold’ (Keats, 1816) bardsbeing the orators of old within Greek society. Walcottwas engrossed in Greek mythology and mentions it constantly within his work, likeKeats, he used these Greek classics as a comparison to the modern times he wasliving in. One using this to describe the discovery of the new world whilst theother describes living within this New World almost a century later. Throughoutboth Keats’ and Walcott’s’ poems the parallels of the past and present are constantlychallenged, painting a picture of the evolution of literature from the classicsinto what literature has become today, an example of this is Sea Grapes (Walcott, 1948)  ‘ That sail which leans on light, tired of islands, a schooner beating up the Caribbean for home, could be Odysseus, home-bound on the Aegean; that father and husband’s’  Thismeld of both the past and present in the poem creates a contrast.

Schooners are16th century ships that were in use by colonial nations during thecolonial era, he tacitly contrasts this with his mentioning of ‘ Odysseus, homebound on the Aegean’ in the next stanza. Odysseus being a tale from Greekmythology, is on the opposite side of history, like how On First looking into Chapman’s Homer is also written at adifferent point in history. (Keats, 1816) ‘ That deep-browed Homer ruled as hisdemesne; Yet did I never breathe its pure sereneTill I heard Chapman speak out loud andbold:’  Inthis passage Keats speaks of Homer in the same stanza as mentioning Chapman. Heis essentially crediting Chapmans’ translation of the Greek classics, statingthat he had never experienced the pure serenity of the classics until they hadbeen translated by Chapman into English. This shows an almost adulation for theclassics, referring to them as ‘ serene.’ Somethingto note between these two poems is the difference in style, Keats’ poem isquite rigid as a Petrarchan sonnet whilst Walcott’s is a free-flowing poem. This is due to the difference in time periods between them, and the changesthat have occurred in poetry during this time.

Both maintain three line stanzashowever, as it is still an effective way to structure a poem to this day. Laterin his poem Keats initiates a shift in the readers emotions with ‘ Then felt I…'(Keats, 1816). Similar techniques are employed by Walcott to his advantage with’the classics can console, but not enough.

‘ (Walcott, 1948) both techniquesbeing there to illicit an effective emotional response from the reader. This is done to maintain interest from the reader, as the emotional changesspur on curiosity within them. Walcott himself makes a similarpoint that discovery within poetry is similar to becoming special and unique, suggesting both poets had romanticised views of what a poet was in the world. ‘ Thegift of poetry has made me one of the chosen.’ (Walcott 1948) is an example ofthis, along with ‘ the classics can console, but not enough’ (Walcott, 1948) Thishowever shows that he also romanticised the classics of Greece, like Keats.                                         In conclusion these are two very differentpoets. One was present through the height of colonialism whilst the otherwitnessed its decline.

Walcott’s perspective of colonialism that is visiblethroughout his work contrasts with Keats’ neutral opinion on the matter, as henever mentions his opinion on it throughout the poem. The use of tropes and figuresof speech are common with both, and they are very effective at using them, withKeats’ specialising in verbal imagery and the use of Volta’s whilst Walcottexcels in dramatics and shock value, emanating from his use of a short, brutalstructure. All in all, the differences are quite clear here; one poet is atraditional English romanticist whilst the other is a more modern free flowing versepoet. Bibliography Keats, J. K. (1816). On First looking into Chapman’s Homer.

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