

FINDING LOVE WITHOUT OURSELVES

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How does John Keats' (one of the most studied romantic poets) work compare to today's understanding of love? By looking back throughout history, I will evaluate how the love we have for ourselves as women has changed through time.

Using *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, a medieval love ballad as an example, I will explore how Keats introduces the idea of 'the perfect Woman.' He wishes for the love of a woman he has created using elements he deems as perfect to him. Although, the language we use to express love nowadays in relationships may differ from the past, the idea of 'the perfect woman' remains. With social media being such a big part of our lives, there is more pressure especially for women to look, dress and act a certain way in order to appeal to men. Using Instagram as an example, it is more common for a woman to post pictures which are filtered or edited than to post au-natural. Some women even take it further than filters and feel as though its necessary to have fillers, Botox, and surgery to enhance/change elements of themselves they could feel most Insecure about. However, it is not just social media alone that puts pressure on us women to look a certain way.



Modern day Hip-Hop and rap music explicitly exploits women's body images throughout their lyrics and shames those who do not meet today's beauty standards e.g., a curvy body, small nose, big lips, nails painted and a nice smile and teeth. The list goes on and on,

making it almost impossible for women to feel like they belong in such a strict beauty standard.

However, when covid -19 struck, being locked inside and having an endless amount of time on our hands it definitely gave us all a chance to get to know ourselves personally in a way we might not had time to in the past. With that being said, having nowhere to go meant the need for hair, makeup and a pretty outfit was out the window and lounging around all day in our 'comfies' and bare skin became the new trend. The use of social media also came in to play, social media influencers were taking a break from the full glam side of things and really interacting with how their feelings during difficult times and instead took into action posting more natural pictures and videos opposed to their usual high maintenance content. Whilst this was being pursued, a lot more women were able to connect with content creators they once felt threatened by, by sharing similar content and not feeling as pressured to look a certain way in order to impress others, therefore feeling more comfortable in their own skin and finding a love for themselves they may not have felt previously.

Although it seems that the idea of being perfect still reminds to some degree today, the pressure is slowly releasing. There is now more diversity in what can be considered beautiful. Taking raw videos/pictures of our bodies demonstrating acne and cellulite shows others that these qualities are nothing to be ashamed of and having clear perfect skin all the time is not in fact a reality.



Even advertising for feminine products and clothing are creating the individual beauty of all kinds of women. For example, a recent Dove advert shows a range of women from different ages, race, and body types as well as clothing brands such as I Saw it First and Pretty Little Thing now having curve, petite, and plus size options when shopping.

Overall, the idea that a woman must be of a certain standard in order to be sexy is slowly coming to an end, and the concept of accepting all women for who they are is finally making a small but glorious break though.