

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE — J. KEATS

"ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE" is the most magical of Keats' ode. No other poem in English poetry with the solitary perfection of Coleridge's Kubla Khan casts such a magic spell on our mind. Such is the enchanting music of the lines and so suggestive are the pictures that no word of seems to be.

Swinnburne calls the ode one of the finest master pieces of work in all time and for all age.

The ode to a nightingale is a poignant expression to the poet's longing for release from the fever and the fret of the world. Keats realised that temporal life was full of fret and fever. So he said that the world was

"Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
where youth grows pale, and Spectre thin and lies,
where beauty cannot keep her lustre's eyes"

That is why, he decided to leave the world and sit with the nightingale on the branches of the trees. For, he was greatly enchanted by the melodious song of

of the nightingale. It is for this reason he wishes for "a draught of vintage"

Fade far away, dissolve and
quiet forget the weariness of ^{life}

He thought wine as a potent means of escaping from the miseries of the world and of becoming one with the spirit of the happy bird. But soon he felt that the influence of wine could not help him in the fulfilment of his desire. He, therefore, reject the aid of wine and thinks of ~~not~~ having recourse to poetic inspiration. He says:

"Away, away; for I will fly to thee,

But on the viewless wings of poesy
with the help of imagination, the poet does go to that melodious plot of beechen green where the nightingale of summer sings with full throated — and becomes one with the bird.

By listening to the soul enchanting song of the nightingale in the embalmed ~~dark~~ darkness, the poet becomes superbly happy. He thinks that it would be luxury to die ~~there~~ in the midst of such happiness. The desire for death leads the poet to think of the immortality of the nightingale. The idea that the nightingale would continue to sing even

after his death and he would be dead to the noble dirge that it would sing over his grave, gives him pain. For, he would be unable to enjoy the sweet song after his death. But the spell of imagination does not last long. Soon he was awakened to the rude realities of life. He realises that no amount of imagination can make us escape the tragedy of life. He says:

"Adieu the fancy can not, cheat

So well

As she is farned to do, deceiving elf

So the poem does not give voice of the poet desire for escape from the rude then have merely a second rate poem of the escape. Here we find through out a tug-of-war between the desire to escape, boom and the courage to face the rude sea realities of life. There is an this ode a crossing and an intermingling of opposite current of feelings.

ODE TO NIGHTINGALE is the most complex of the odes of Keats. But in spite of all its complexities. It has a neat structure. Keats ~~shows~~ shows here superb mastery over his technique and power

power of expression. His words are
superbly ^{precious} ~~beautiful~~. Summer in lines
like "singest of supremely bellicious
summer in bull-throated ease" with
beaded bubbles winking at the brain"
are highly picturesque. There is nothing at
the vagueness of Shelley's pictures which
in spite of all their brilliance claim
to have a clear cut impression on our
mind. The rich sensuousness of Keats
is evident through out the poem. In the
fifth stanza the poet guesses the ~~different~~
different blowers which have blossomed
in that part of the forest where the night
nightingale is pouring forth of the five senses
are alert. Only the sense of vision is
dim. But in spite of all sensuousness there
is no where any suggestion of satiric or
sentimentality. There is a sense of
strength thrown out. The grasp on the real
is firm.

The ten line stanza at the ode that
Keats has wrought out of the sonnet
is an excellent piece of poetic invention
with its intricate rhyme plan ever repeating
and yet varying its sound and thus helping
to produce. The ~~betweening~~ bewitching effect
which is its most striking quality.