

# To a Skylark

Percy Bysshe Shelley

June 1820

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit!  
Bird thou never wert—  
That from heaven or near it  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.  
Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest,  
Like a cloud of fire;  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.  
In the golden light'ning  
Of the sunken sun,  
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,  
Thou dost float and run,  
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.  
The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight;  
Like a star of heaven,  
In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight—  
Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear,  
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.  
All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As when night is bare,  
From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;  
What is most like thee?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see,  
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody:—  
Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:  
Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:  
Like a glow-worm golden  
In a dell of dew,  
Scattering unbeholden  
Its aërial hue  
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:  
Like a rose embower'd  
In its own green leaves,  
By warm winds deflower'd,  
Till the scent it gives  
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-wingèd thieves.  
Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awaken'd flowers—  
All that ever was  
Joyous and clear and fresh—thy music doth surpass.  
Teach us, sprite or bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine:  
I have never heard  
Praise of love or wine  
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.  
Chorus hymeneal,  
Or triumphal chant,  
Match'd with thine would be all  
But an empty vaunt—  
A thin wherein we feel there is some hidden want.  
What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains?  
What shapes of sky or plain?  
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be:  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee:  
Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.  
Waking or asleep,  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream,  
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?  
We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.  
Yet, if we could scorn  
Hate and pride and fear,  
If we were things born  
Not to shed a tear,  
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.  
Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found,  
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!  
Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know;  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

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