

## ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

### John Keats

<p>I          Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,          Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,          Sylvan historian, who canst thus express          A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:          What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape          Of deities or mortals, or of both,          In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?          What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?          What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?          What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?</p> <p>II.          Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard          Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;          Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,          Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:          Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave          Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;          Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,          Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;          She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,          For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!</p> <p>III.          Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed          Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;          And, happy melodist, unwearied,          For ever piping songs for ever new;          More happy love! more happy, happy love!          For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,          For ever panting, and for ever young;          All breathing human passion far above,          That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,          A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.</p> <p>IV.          Who are these coming to the sacrifice?          To what green altar, O mysterious priest,          Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,          And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?          What little town by river or sea shore,          Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,</p>	<p>I          The poem opens with three consecutive <i>metaphors</i>: the comparisons between the urn and, respectively, a "bride of quietness," a "foster-child of silence and slow time," and a "Sylvan historian".</p> <p><b>Tu (Thou=Arc.:You)</b>, ancora <b>inviolata (unravish'd)</b> sposa della quiete!  <b>Figlia adottiva (foster-child)</b> del tempo lento e del silenzio,          Narratrice silvana, tu che una favola fiorita <b>puoi così raccontare (canst thus express-canst thus=Arc.: can so)</b>, più dolce dei miei versi,          Quale intarsiata leggenda di foglie <b>pervade la tua (thy=your) forma (haunts about thy shape)</b>, sono dei o mortali, o entrambi insieme, a Tempe (in Tessaglia) o nelle valli dell'Arcadia (la patria della poesia pastorale)?          E che uomini o dei sono questi? Che <b>vergini restie(maidens loth - loth=loath)?</b>, Qual'è la <b>folle proposito (mad pursuit)? Quale lotta da fuggire (What ...escape)?</b> Che flauti e tamburelli (timbrels)? Quale estasi selvaggia?</p> <p>II          The second stanza opens with a <i>paradox</i>: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ are sweeter".</p> <p>Le melodie ascoltate sono dolci, ma più dolci ancora son quelle inascoltate. Pertanto, o <b>voi (ye-Arc.:you)</b> soavi flauti, continuate a suonare, ma non per l'<b>udito (sensual ear: orecchio corporeo)</b>; ma più <b>accattivanti (endear'd)</b> suonate per lo spirito arie <b>eanza suono (no tone - silenziose)</b>.          E tu giovane bello, non potrai mai finire, il tuo canto sotto quegli alberi che mai saranno spogli;          E tu, amante audace, non potrai mai baciare lei, sebbene tu abbia raggiunto quasi la <b>meta (goal)</b>; ma <b>non affliggerti (do not grieve)</b>;          Lei non potrà <b>invecchiare (fade:avvizzire)</b>, sebbene tu non abbia (<b>hast -Arc.:have</b>) la tua felicità, l'amerai per <b>sempre (wilt = will)</b>, ed ella sarà per sempre così bella.</p> <p>III          Stanza 3 ends with a bitter reflection on the short-lived passions of human beings.</p> <p>Ah felici, felici <b>rami (boughs)</b>! Che non potete <b>perdere (shed)</b> le vostre foglie, nè mai dire addio alla Primavera;          E felice anche te, musico mai stanco,          Per sempre suonando canzoni sempre nuove;          Ma più felice te, amore più felice,          Per sempre caldo e ancora da godere          Per sempre <b>anelante (panting)</b>, giovane in eterno.          Superiori (<b>far above</b>: molto al di sopra) siete a ogni vivente (palpitante) passione umana <b>che lascia il cuore in grande affanno e sazio (That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd)</b>, la fronte in fiamme, secca la lingua.</p> <p>IV          Stanza 4 introduces a note of sadness and desolation. The words belonging to this semantic area are: "sacrifice", "silent" and "desolate".</p> <p>Chi sono questi che vengono al sacrificio?          Verso quale verde altare, sacerdote misterioso,          conduci <b>quella giovenca che muggisce al cielo (that heifer lowing at the skies)</b>, i fianchi morbidi <b>coperti (drest = dredded)</b> da ghirlande?</p>
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<p>Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn? And, little town, thy streets for evermore Will silent be; and not a soul to tell Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.</p> <p>V. O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede Of marble men and maidens overwrought, With forest branches and the trodden weed; Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral! When old age shall this generation waste, Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st, «Beauty is truth, truth beauty», - that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.</p>	<p>E quale paese sul mare, o sul fiume, O inerpicato sui monti con una pacifica cittadella E' svuotato di questa gente in questo sacro <b>mattino (morn=morning)</b>? Silenziose, o paese, le tue strade saranno per sempre, e nessuna anima potrà <b>mai (e'er =ever)</b> tornare a dire perché sei stato abbandonato.</p> <p>V The last stanza can be divided into two parts as well: the quatrain, which contains the poet's return from his journey of imagination to real life, and the sestet, which sums up the result of the poet's experience with an aesthetic consideration.</p> <p>O forma Attica! <b>leggiadra forma</b> (Fair attitude-lett.:posa)! Con fregio (with brede) scolpita con una stirpe di uomini e fanciulle di marmo (Of marble ...overwrought), coi rami della foresta ed erba calpestata (the trodden weed) Tu, forma silenziosa, ci sentiamo smarriti di fronte a te come di fronte all'eternità (dost ...doth eternità - doth =Arc.: does - dost =Arc.: do): <b>Fredda pastorale!</b> Quando la vecchia età questa generazione distruggerà, tu rimarrai (thou shalt remain - Thou shalt = you shall), in mezzo ai dolori diversi, non più i nostri, amica all'uomo, cui dirai (thou say'st =you say) "Bellezza è verità, la verità è bellezza (truth beauty )" - questo solo sulla terra sapete, ed è quanto basta. The last two lines express a particular Keats' concept, since he identifies beauty and truth as the only type of knowledge on Earth. This concept paves the way to Aestheticism.</p>
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**Thème:** Written in 1819, Ode on a Grecian Urn was the third of the five "great odes" of 1819, which are generally believed to have been written in the following order - Psyche, Nightingale, Grecian Urn, Melancholy, and Autumn.

In Ode on a Grecian Urn, the poet observes a relic of ancient Greek civilization, an urn painted with two scenes from Greek life. The first scene depicts musicians and lovers in a setting of rustic beauty. The poet attempts to identify with the characters because to him they represent the timeless perfection only art can capture.

The author wants to exalt the beauty of works of art. In fact, the beauty of the urn will remain eternal, while the beauty of human beings certainly will decay. So, the very important kind of beauty isn't physical one, but it is spiritual one, which is related to eternal. Moreover, Keats underlines the importance of art, as a means for man to become eternal and to be remembered by mankind after his death.

**Form:** Type of poem: lyric poem. Type of lyric poem: ode

This poem is an irregular Pindaric ode. It consists of 5 stanzas made up of 10 lines.

The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDE DCE. So, each stanza, is made up of two parts: a quatrain and a sestet.