

The Relation Between the Real and the Ideal  
in the Odes of John Keats

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Letters  
and the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of Bilkent University  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
English Language and Literature

By  
Zohreh Moghimi

June, 1994

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*Zohreh Moghimi*  
*tarafından bağışlanmıştır*

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To My Beloved Brother, Farhad Moghimi

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.



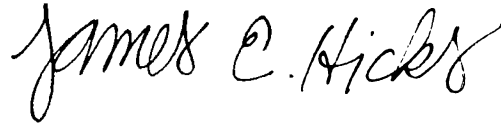
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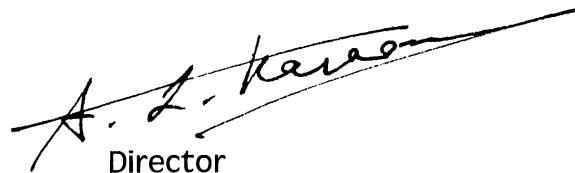
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## Abstract

### The Relation Between the Real and the Ideal in the Odes of John Keats

Zohreh Moghimi

M. A. In English Literature

Advisor: Prof. Dr. Sema Kormalı

June, 1994

The great odes--"Ode to Psyche, " "Ode to a Nightingale, " "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " "Ode on Melancholy, " and "To Autumn"--were written in the year 1819, when Keats was approaching his imminent death from tuberculosis. In the odes, the poet presents conflicts, paradoxes, oxymorons, and dualities, the resolution of which is essential in approaching and understanding one of the main themes of the odes, the relation between the real and the ideal. Once the conflicts are resolved, the reader would be able to understand the main ideas and views presented in each ode and would be able to trace Keats's development as a poet.

Keats's early experiences play an important role in his choice of themes, and it is reasonable to associate the main themes--the transitoriness of life and beauty, the inevitability of change and death, and the relation between the physical and the spiritual--with the different events of the poet's childhood and adulthood. To cite an instance, the death of his parents, and later that of his brother, as well as his love relation with Fanny Brawne, influenced him deeply. To Keats, life is a series of complementary contradictions which are functions of each other; thus, he never overlooks the real in order to reach the ideal. In the earlier odes--"Ode to Psyche, " "Ode to a Nightingale, " and "Ode on a Grecian Urn"--the poet tries to combine the real and the ideal realms because one has liveliness and the other permanence. In the later odes--"Ode on Melancholy"

and "To Autumn"--he accepts life and its process of change, and he presents death as a natural phenomenon.

Keats's development as a poet can be traced when we consider the differences among the odes, but they are similar in spirit and quality. They all examine the real and the ideal through presenting striking images and sound effects, which are coupled with the rich tones of the ode form.

## ÖZ

Gerçek ile İdealin arasındaki ilişki  
Zohreh Moghimi  
İngiliz Edebiyatı  
yüksek Lisans  
Tez yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Sema Kormalı  
Haziran, 1994

İngiliz edebiyatı Romantik döneminin ikinci kuşak şairlerinden John Keats'in kısa hayatının en verimli yılları, ölümünden iki yıl öncesine rastlar. En başarılı şiirlerinden sayılan "Ode to Psyche", "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode on Melancholy" ve "To Autumn"u 1819'da, yani verem hastalığının iyice ilerlediği yılda yazmıştır. Bu nedenle, önceki şiirlerinde de kullandığı insan hayatının kısılgı, ölümsüzlüğe ve mükemmelliğe duyulan özlem gibi konular bu şiirlerinde daha da belirgin olarak göze çarpmaktadır. İnsanın gerçek ve düş arasında bocalaması, özlemleri ile birlikte düştüğü ikilemler, şairin kullandığı kelime ve imgelerdeki zıtlıklarda ifade edilmektedir. Keats için zıtlık ve ikilem hayatın en vazgeçilmez olgularıdır.

Keats'in şiirlerinin ana temaları olan hayatın ve güzelliğin geçiciliği, ölümün ve değişime karşı koymanın olanaksızlığının yanı sıra fiziksel ve ruhsal olguların arasındaki ilişkiler, şairin çocukluğundan ve gençlik yıllarından gelen tecrübelerini yansıtmaktadır. Anne ve babasının, daha sonra da kardeşinin ölümü ve Fanny Brawne ile umutsuzca yaşadığı aşk onu derinden etkilemiştir. Keats için yaşam, birbirinden soyutlanamayan tezatlardan oluşmakta, bu nedenle şair ideal olana ulaşabilmek için gerçeği de gözardı etmemektedir. "Ode to Psyche", "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn"de şair gerçek ve ideal kavramlarını birleştirmeye çalışmıştır, çünkü bu kavramlardan birinde canlılık diğesinde ölümsüzlük vardır. "Ode on



"Melancholy" ve "To Autumn"da ise, Keats yaşam ve onun getirdiđi deđişimi kabullenip, ölümü doğal bir olgu olarak görmektedir.

Bu şiirler, Keats'in sanatında ulaştığı fikir ve teknik olgunluđunu sergilemektedir. Keats bu şiirlerinde benzer temalar ve teknikler kullanmaktadır. Gerçek ve idealin doğasını araştıran şiirlerinin hepsinde çarpıcı imgeler, mükemmel bir ses uyumu, ve ahenk bulunmaktadır.

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## I . Introduction

A recurrent theme in Keats's poetry is the relation between the real and the ideal, between contrary but complementary elements. In the great odes ( "Ode to Psyche, " "Ode to a Nightingale, " "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " "Ode on Melancholy, " and "To Autumn " ), written during the final years of the poet's life, this theme finds a fuller and extensive utterance. "Ode to Psyche" initiates the sequence of the spring odes, but the exact order in which the other spring odes are composed is unknown. Most of the critics agree that "Ode to Psyche" is followed by "Ode to a Nightingale, " "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " and then by "Ode on Melancholy. " The complementary elements, such as life and death, pain and pleasure, the actual and the imaginary, the physical and the spiritual, are some of the facets of these contradictory elements; thus, the most important point in reading and understanding the poems is realizing the nature of the conflicts. In the great odes Keats gave utterance to many of his earlier ideas, but expressed them with great force and immediacy.

During the last phase of his life, he preferred the ode to the sonnet because of the greater freedom he found in the ode form. Keats's experiment on the longer and less regular form of the ode, as well as that on the sonnet form, resulted in the spring odes of 1819, and in "To Autumn. " With the exception of "Ode To Psyche" and "To Autumn, " Keats combined a Shakespearean quatrain, four lines of iambic pentameter rhyming ABAB, with a Petrarchan sestet, six lines of iambic pentameter rhyming CDECDE, in the other odes. He used irregular stanzas in "Ode to Psyche, " while in "To Autumn, " he made "a tentative advance towards that insertion of an additional line which is his crowning technical achievement" (Ridley 1963, 199). Like Horace, Keats used one kind of stanza

within an ode, but his stanzas are longer than Horace's. In his notion of the ode as a significant utterance dealing with essential matters of life, Keats followed Pindar and his tradition. Like Pindar, Keats frequently used exclamations and apostrophes to achieve grand effects.

The dual tone that pervades the odes--that of the sadness, and of happiness--is in keeping with the themes, which concern the conflicts and paradoxes in life, in that it provides the dialectic which is necessary for his purpose. In other words, through presenting the conflicts and paradoxes in life, he creates a dialectic which gives shape to the odes. The imagery used also concerns these contrary states of the mind. Dualities in life are seen as inevitable and inseparable, as well as ever-present and ever-lasting. To point out this affinity between the past and the present, Keats often uses situations and stories from classical mythology, which also reflect human experience and history. Finally, he considers and presents imagination as the most significant faculty by means of which the true poet can reach great poetry and transcend the limitations of the material world; however, Keats does not overlook the realities comprehended by reason.

Considering the different ideas and perspectives in the odes, it is possible to trace a perceptible development in the main theme, the relation between the real and the ideal, and in the poet's attitude to it. Keats tries to combine the real and the ideal in "Ode to Psyche, " "Ode to a Nightingale, " and "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " while in the later odes, such as "Ode on Melancholy" and "To Autumn, " accepting life as it really is, he celebrates the actual world and enjoys what it offers to him. Clearly, the fact that Keats lost his parents and his brothers when he was still very young, and the pain he experienced because of his love relation with Fanny Brawne, affected his outlook on life and consequently the theme of his poetry. Keats asserts that although life and death, pain and pleasure, the actual and the imaginary, the physical and the spiritual are in conflict with

each other, they complement each other since each of the extremes is meaningless without the other. In his two odal hymns, "Ode to Psyche " and "To Autumn, " goddess Psyche, who represents the human soul, and mother earth are addressed and celebrated. Perhaps one of the most essential points in the two poems is that the poet does not consider the traditional values of christianity, but deals with a sort of humanistic paganism. The fact that Psyche is given the highest status among the Olympians suggests the importance of the spiritual and the significance of the human attempt to explore the unknown region of human mind and soul. Moreover, celebrating mother earth as the goddess of corn and harvest, "To Autumn" presents the natural process of the season to argue that change is inevitable. In "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " considering a bird and an antique object as symbols of art, he argues that although the artist's death is inevitable, art is immortal, and thus he shows permanence of the ideal as opposed to transitoriness of life. In "Ode on Melancholy, " melancholy is not presented as a concept, but as an experience which should be faced and felt, so that the sufferer may comprehend the coexistence of sadness and happiness, pain and pleasure.

Two essential themes related to the main one are intensity and permanence which are not only concerned deeply but also balanced by the moral argument that points out the danger of separating elements of the actual life from those of the ideal and spiritual. " 'Intensity' seems to be the process by which the reader (or perceiver) is irresistibly drawn into the life of the work of art, the point at which *its* reality becomes our own, and we are participating in its action with fully awakened feelings" (White 1987, 177). Through sensory imagery the poet shows a situation of intense emotion and feeling in the odes and invites the reader to project his own way of feeling into a symbol, an object or event. For instance, in "Ode to Psyche, " he portrays Psyche and Cupid at the climax of their love

relationship, while in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" the figures are fixed at the moment of "wild ecstasy. " In "Ode to a Nightingale" Keats clearly talks about his complex and intense feelings of numbness, delight, and sorrow as a result of listening to the bird's beautiful song. In addition, in "Ode on Melancholy" he portrays short-lived beauties and depicts situations of vivid emotions, the most interesting of which is presented by an angry mistress who is raving. Finally, "To Autumn" shows growth in nature by presenting the autumnal process and a visual intensity: autumn cooperates with the sun to bring everything to maturity.

Like intensity, the poet's desire for permanence is a significant point in the odes and helps the reader to understand the meaning of the poems and the attitude of the poet. For example, in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Keats shows his desire for permanence of beauty, happiness, love, and all good things that life offers to man; however, he is also aware of the fact that beauty and decay, joy and sorrow, life and death are inseparable. Thus, he asserts that these contrary elements are different functions of the same system and are meaningful when they are not disunited. "To Autumn" also brings beauty and decay, light and darkness, life and death together and implies that life is full of dualities and paradoxes that coexist. Keats's ideas about the real and the ideal reach maturity of outlook and judgment as he moves towards the later poems and that is why in "Ode on Melancholy" and "To Autumn" he no longer attempts to unite the temporal and eternal worlds, but accepts life as it is. He does not consider human "fever" and "fret" as the result of sorrow and pain like the way he did in "Ode to a Nightingale. " However, it should be understood that Keats does not give up the real in order to reach the ideal because for him the actual provides a way to spiritual; therefore, he rejects death in "Ode to a Nightingale, " since he knows that death separates him from the ideal forever.

Reflecting the theme, the tone creates a mixture of contrary moods, such as joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, sadness and delight. Moods of slackness, numbness, and forgetfulness, as well as those of admiration, adoration, and respectfulness, may also be felt in the odes. In "Ode to Psyche" the poet shows his deep respect to Psyche and admires her as the most important goddess among the Olympians as she represents the human soul, while in "To Autumn" shows his gratefulness to autumn and to mother earth, since they offer food to man. However, the mood of sadness is also implied as autumn reminds the poet and the reader of winter and consequently death. "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on Melancholy" present joy and sadness, pleasure and pain together: while in the former the poet says that he is both happy and sad as the result of listening to the bird's song, in the latter he asserts that melancholy and joy coexist, and man cannot separate them. The similar tone may be felt in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in which the vase makes the observer happy and sad at the same time as it takes him to the ideal realm of permanence, but causes him to realize the sorrow of the human condition deeply.

Keats looks at life from different perspectives which gives maturity of outlook to his odes; and it is through conflicts and contrasts in life that he creates a dialectic that gives shape to the odes as far as the main theme is concerned. Approaching the main idea from different angles, he brings the reader near to a symbol, an experience, or a process. For instance, he not only shows that autumn brings maturity and life to everything in nature, but also presents the coming of death and darkness as autumn will inevitably be replaced by winter. In "Ode on Melancholy," melancholy is suggested to be both productive and destructive, and the poet argues that melancholy should not just be associated with death because it is through experiencing sorrow and pain that man can comprehend the coexistence of contrary elements of life: delight and sorrow, pleasure and pain are



meaningful when they are together. Keats approaches the antique vase from two different points of view in "Ode on a Grecian Urn": firstly, he presents the urn as the symbol of permanence and immortality of art and then shows it as a cold object. The examples suggest the significance and advantage of the dialectical form because it allows the poet to demonstrate different sides of the argument, and helps the reader to understand and feel the poet's view and emotion.

Keats packs various ideas in his odes and uses different images together to intensify their effects. For example, in "Ode on Melancholy" he presents senses of sight, taste, and touch together to encourage the reader to see the beautiful scenes in his imagination, taste the salty water and touch the pieces of sand in his mind. He also uses words from classical mythology and repeats important words to attract the attention of the reader to the main idea. To cite an instance, in "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the word happy is repeated through the poem to stress the conflict between the real and the ideal. Besides the use of sensory imagery and repetition, he also uses sound effects, alliteration and assonance to call the attention of the reader to the facts that ordinarily would not be noticed, and to invite him to project his own way of feeling into a symbol, an object, or a scene. At this point, it is important to mention that Keats explores objects, animals, events, and even human nature without any preconceptions or prejudice. This philosophical approach was explained as "negative capability" in a letter he wrote to his brothers (21, ? 27 December, 1817):

I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously--I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching

after fact & reason--Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetratum of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge (In Cook 1990, 370).

"Negative capability" encourages the reader to identify himself with the object of contemplation and allows him to gain a view of life objectively. It is the ability to leave the self in order to enter the world of imagination freely without any personal or moral intrusion. "It is, of course, precisely the capability of *not* being certain, of being open to mystery and doubt, that allows the 'Man of Achievement' to feel what he does without the intrusion of thought . . ." (Hopkins 1984, 93). Through "negative capability" Keats exposes life from different perspectives and presents its various sides, and the poet needs his imagination in order to be able to think about his subject deeply.

Imagination is very important to Keats because it enables him to create events, characters, and settings in his mind, and because it helps him to create essential realities and to reach the truth. For example, imagining Cupid and Psyche in "Ode to Psyche," he concentrates on Psyche to show one of the most important facts of human life: human soul as well as spirituality have been neglected through the history of mankind. It is in the poet's mind that Psyche's status as the symbol of the soul and the goddess of spirituality is restored. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn" the complementary nature of life and art as one of the most important and interesting truths of life is gained through concentrating on an imaginary object of art. Keats asserts that the imagination of a poet allows him to compose great poems, but he never overlooks the significance of reason. Imagination as the element of the ideal, and reason as that of the real are complementary and inseparable; however, reason alone does not lead the true poet to creativity:

The poet has power to ascend into the empyrean or to find a home in the bottomless depths of the ocean; his seeing is like that of the Gods, to whom all things, in "Earth and Heaven and Hell" , are clear. Reason could not do this. All his lifetime Keats earnestly, passionately, sought truth, but not truth through reason alone. Reason could never carry a poet to the heart of man,

Be he King

Or poorest of the beggar clan,

nor help him find his way to all the instincts of bird, wren, or eagle; and reason could never uncurtain "heaven" , nor guide in exploring the "passages all dark" that lead to the inner "Penetralium" of the "Burden of the Mystery" , where the miseries and agonies of the world are bared. Keats could not trust reason to reveal ultimate reality to him (In Hill 1992, 184).

According to Keats, the true poet should be capable of creating a spiritual reality from the facts and materials that are offered to him by the actual world, and it is only possible through the use of imagination:

Perceptions of this reality can come only through the operation of the imaginative faculty; only through the imagination can the poet see the world true and see it whole, and only through the imagination can he create and re-create new forms of beauty. This holds in the realm of imaginative literature and history as well as in relation to the real and ideal worlds; and the capacity to create is largely independent of time or place or circumstances (In Hill 1992, 191).

In spite of his rich poetry, especially his odes, Keats's reputation was established only after his death, and it was in fact not until the twentieth century that his poems were appreciated fully and deeply. In the

nineteenth century there were still prejudices about him and his poetry, and one of the most important reasons of which was his lower class origin. It was difficult for some of the critics of the time, especially those belonging to the higher class, to accept that a poet like Keats should write about subjects like love, sex, and spirituality. Keats was prejudicely judged to be a weak person who was not able to face the facts of life; however, an objective approach to his poetry can strongly prove his gradual development of maturity in point of view on life and its elements and in his judgment. What makes Keats different from the other poets is that he achieved so much in the short period of his life, although the critics of the time were not able to see his development as a poet because of their bias, preconceptions, and prejudgments. He had spent six years as a student of medicine and thus started his career as a poet during the final years of his life. When he composed "To Autumn, " he knew that he was near death because of tuberculosis. In spite of the fact that he was not educated in literature like his contemporaries, he became successful in educating himself to become one of the greatest poets in English romanticism, who is also known to be the best among the romantics according to the modern standards.

Considering the theme of the relation between the real and the ideal and the facts of human life asserted in relation to it, the richness of the tone and beauty of the form and style in the odes, the reader may realize the extent to which Keats successfully used his imagination and talent to create spiritual truths from the materials of actual life.

## II . "Ode to Psyche": The Union of Immortality and Mortality

"Ode to Psyche" is generally accepted to be the first of the odes Keats wrote in the spring of 1819. The poem is based on Apuleius's version of the myth in which Venus, jealous of Psyche's beauty, orders her son, Cupid, to punish the beautiful girl by making her fall in love with a base creature. The god himself falls in love with Psyche and starts meeting her only at nights. Although Cupid has commanded the girl not to look at him in the light, one night Psyche lights a lamp to discover the identity of her lover which causes them to be separated. Trying hard to find her beloved, Psyche goes to meet Venus, who orders her to perform difficult tasks. Cupid pities Psyche and begs Jupiter to give immortality to her. Being an immortal goddess, Psyche becomes Cupid's wife and enjoys her union with him. Keats also used the Greek concept of the word *Psyche*, soul or mind, as well as its meaning of the butterfly, which implies the lightness of the spirit so that it can fly and leave the body.

On the allegorical level, Psyche's union with Cupid is the joining of the soul and love. What Keats seems to have found attractive in Psyche is the fact that being a late goddess, she had relatively few followers and he chose to devote himself to her praise and veneration. Moreover, as the goddess represents intellectual beauty, which has been neglected through the history of human beings, the poet tries to restore her divinity and show her importance. Although some critics, like Harold Bloom, believe that the myth of Psyche and Cupid has little to do with "Ode to Psyche" (1987, 1), it can be argued that the myth explains the way the human soul achieved immortality. The story has much in common with the history of the human beings in that Psyche experiences trials and tribulations which permit her to understand the sorrow of the human condition. It should be

noted that the poem does not only present Psyche and her importance, but also the significance of the union of the two deities. Thus, soul and body, the spiritual and the actual, innocence and experience, are two complementary parts of a whole.

The poem begins with the poet asking the goddess to listen to his "tuneless numbers, " composed in pain and joy. His verse is "tuneless" reflecting his sorrow over the neglect of the goddess in spite of her importance. Furthermore, it can be argued that because of his deep respect for Psyche, Keats prefers to reflect her sufferings through his "tuneless numbers. " According to Helen Vendler, Keats's numbers are "tuneless" because of the "piety and pity for the banished goddess. " In her view, the poet's song is an "unheard melody, " a silent internal song, sung in the soul (1983, 55). The oxymoron, "tuneless numbers" may also reflect the poet's desire to understate the beauty of his poem since Psyche's spiritual beauty is more attractive to him. In addition, the word "wrung" suggests pain, which is in contrast with "sweet enforcement and remembrance. " Keats's effort to compose his poetry, to use his imagination, and to recall his memory, are "sweet" experiences. These practices may remind the reader of another oxymoron in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in which "unheard melodies" are "sweeter" than "heard melodies, " if the observer of the vase is not just a passive viewer who looks at it: he has to use his imagination and fancy to hear the "unheard melodies. "

In spite of the fact that the experience of composing the poem is sweet, Keats is sorry that the goddess's secret "should be sung, " and this may be one of the reasons of his pain. The poet might be sorry because considering her tribulations and the neglect she has suffered saddens him:

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung  
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,  
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung

Even into thine own soft-conched ear:

Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see

The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes? (1 – 6)

The poet does not know if he has really seen the goddess or not, but he thinks that he may have "dreamt" about her. This situation might remind the reader of the similar one in "Ode to a Nightingale" in which Keats is not sure if his vision is a dream or not. To Keats, a figment of imagination can be more real than reality, and he argues that imagination and reality are inextricable. "Is the speaker's sight a 'vision' or an illusion " ? asks John Barnard and claims that this uncertainty is the central point in the ode (1993, 101). The doubt itself presents the poet's idea about the relation between the actual and the imaginary. This view is also reflected in a letter to Benjamin Bailey (22 November, 1817): "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream--he awoke and found it truth" (In Fraser 1993, 31). Keats emphasizes that the real and the ideal exist together, and it is impossible to isolate them. He sees "the winged Psyche" and her lover in his imagination, but what he sees is as actual as the reality.

Later in the stanza, the poet talks about a forest in which the "two fair creatures, " Psyche and Cupid, "couched side by side. " He sees the forest and the characters in his mind, in the same way that he visualizes an antique vase in "Ode on a Grecian Urn. " Here the mental picture, as in the latter poem, begins with an identification of the characters, and then goes on to the description of the events and scenes:

I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,

And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,

Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side

In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof

Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran

A brooklet, scarce espied: (7 – 12)

According to the myth, Cupid, the god of love, meets Psyche only in the darkness; however, the poet sees them together in the forest in the daylight (Bate 1992, 490). Keats allows them to meet each other during the day because he wants to show that the two--one presenting love and experience, the other soul and innocence--exist together. Thus, their union should not remain as a secret, since the union itself is one of the most important points that man should learn when he concentrates on the relation between the real and the ideal. From the description of the characters, the poet then shifts to the description of nature.

The depiction of nature is based largely on personification and pathetic fallacy. Keats animates inanimate objects and projects his own way of feeling into nature. In his personified picture of nature, the effect achieved is that of foregrounding, in which the poet calls the reader's attention to such aspects of the setting as would otherwise go unnoticed. This is also in keeping with Keats's common use of sensory imagery: he makes use of nearly all the five senses in involving the reader in the setting he has created in his mind. For example, " 'Mid hush'd, " "cool-rooted, " and "fragrant-eyed, " are used to describe flowers and to suggest their silence, freshness, and smell. According to Douglas Bush, Keats's power of imagining works more effectively and strongly with things and objects rather than with characters. Here nature, including the flowers, is more real than Psyche and Cupid (1966, 129). After describing the natural scene, there is another shift to the description of the characters, and here the interesting point is that nature and the characters share the similar qualities:

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,  
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,  
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;  
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;  
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,



As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,  
And ready still past kisses to outnumber

At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:

The winged boy I knew;

But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?

His Psyche true! (13 – 23)

Keats uses phrases and adjectives, such as "whisp'ring roof of leaves, " "trembled blossoms, " and " 'mid hush'd, " flowers to describe the natural setting. The adjectives reflect the qualities that would describe the characters as the epithets are similar in meaning, with "calm-breathing" associated with the lovers. The phrase "cool-rooted flowers" implies their freshness in the same way that "aurorean love" implies the freshness of the love relation. In the same way that gentleness and freshness are reflected by the natural setting through the use of the adjectives, phrases like "soft-handed slumber" and "tender eye-dawn of aurorean love, " suggest softness and freshness as the qualities that characterize the god and the goddess. According to Brian Stone, by the help of his fancy the poet enters the forest in which he sees the goddess and her lover. They lie "calm-breathing on the bedded grass" and embrace each other. Their peaceful and close contact suggest the immortality of their love (1992, 70).

The tableau of the lovers reminds the reader of the picture of the lovers on the Grecian urn: like the figures on the vase, Cupid and Psyche are in the state of fresh desire. "The figures, like those on the Grecian urn, are somewhat apart: 'Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu' " (Bate 1992, 491). No immediate sexual experience is given, but the scene suggests a strong desire. As in "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " it is implied that once strong desire is consummated in the sexual experience, the freshness is gone: love remains "happy" when desire is not fulfilled. Sexual union is the climax of a love relation after which there will be a decrease in the degree

of love and desire. Vendler has pointed out that the " 'Mid hush'd flowers, " with their cool roots and cool colors create a serene setting that does not excite sexuality; thus, the characters symbolize an eternal erotic desire almost immortalized in this tableau (1983, 54).

The poet asserts that he knows the male figure or the "winged boy" Cupid, but seems to be unsure about the identity of the female. She is identified with a "happy dove, " a soft-voiced bird that symbolizes peace and innocence. These are the first characteristics of the goddess to which the reader is introduced. Morris Dickstein argues that when the poet is wandering in the forest, he first recognizes Cupid. This occasion implies "his earlier and simpler commitment to love, to the 'worship' of Cynthia and Venus. " The recognition of Psyche then foreshadows that the place of the two goddesses is going to be taken by Psyche and Cupid (1971, 199). The poet uses the word "his Psyche" to present the fact that they are inseparable, as Cupid represents worldly experience and Psyche symbolizes the soul and spirituality. In spite of the conflict between the real and the ideal, they cannot be separated, since they complement each other as two halves of a whole.

In the second stanza, Keats concentrates on Psyche and gives more information about her status as a goddess who is the youngest and the "loveliest" goddess among the Olympians:

O latest born and loveliest vision far  
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!  
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,  
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;  
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,  
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;  
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan  
Upon the midnight hours;

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet

From chain-swung censer teeming;

No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat

Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming. (24 – 35)

The sounds of "faded" and "far" are repeated in the word "fairer" and recurrence in sound emphasizes Psyche's neglect as a goddess. It also hints at the poet's using his voice and fancy to bring Psyche closer to the reader (Aske 1985, 106). She is "fairer" than the Moon goddess because she knows what human suffering is. She is preferred to all the ancient Olympian goddesses because she is the "latest. " She does not personify the primeval forces, such as the wind or the sea, but symbolizes the complicated human soul and presents the hidden forces in nature (In Fraser 1993, 209). Psyche alone is "fairer" than Phoebe and Venus because innocence and love exist together within the soul, while Phoebe just presents chastity and Venus only love. Although Phoebe is the goddess of the moon, Keats presents her as only a star, which implies that she is not as bright as she is expected to be. Venus also is called Vesper which suggests her to be the evening star; and such a star is not a bright one. Venus is associated with a "glow-worm of the sky, " which gives an idea about the color of her light: the green color itself does not show brightness but lack of radiance and shine.

Although Psyche is lovelier than the other goddesses, she does not have any "altar, " "virgin-choir, " "lute, " "pipe, " shrine, " "grove, " and "oracle. " As Martin Aske comments, Psyche's neglect as a goddess is emphasized through the use of negative words, such as "none, " "nor, " and "no, " and also through the letter "O, " which echoes "no" (1985, 107). After stressing Psyche's non-acknowledgment, the poet starts the third stanza by explaining the reason why she has been neglected. She has become a goddess "too late" to be worshipped: .

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,

Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,  
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,  
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;  
Yet even in these days so far retir'd  
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,  
Fluttering among the faint Olympians, (36 – 42)

Ancient man accepted every element and force of nature as the sign of the existence of powerful gods, whereas modern man is no longer sensitive to these elements since he has learned to look at nature scientifically. Therefore, Psyche, who was neglected by the sensitive ancients, is not going to be valued and praised by modern man. According to Aileen Ward, nature in the modern world is not "god-haunted" anymore, so the poet creates a sacred place in his mind and becomes the "self-appointed" priest of Psyche (1965, 279):

I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.  
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan  
Upon the midnight hours;  
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet  
From swung censer teeming;  
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat  
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming. (43 – 49)

Keats emphasizes the importance of fancy because it is through imagination that he builds a shrine for the goddess and becomes her worshipper: he "sees" and "sings" by his "eyes inspired, " or in his imagination.

In the second stanza, the "machinery of worship, " is stressed by the use of words like "altar, " "choir, " "voice, " "lute, " "incense, " "shrine, " "grove, " and "oracle. " In the third stanza "the same apparatus is humanized and eulogized" through identical words. Keats implies that he is

more "orthodox" than ancient people and that is why he is going to restore Psyche's status as a goddess (Bloom 1987, 1 – 2). Clearly, the poet not only shows the importance of the goddess, but also presents the significance of the artist and his art in creating something imaginary from real life:

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane  
In some untrodden region of my mind,  
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,  
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:  
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees  
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;  
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,  
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;  
And in the midst of this wide quietness  
A rosy sanctuary will I dress  
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,  
With buds, and bells and stars without a name, (50 – 61)

The pronoun "I" in the stanza presents the poet's power and voice. In addition, "I" is implied in words such as "brightness, " "lyre, " "fire, " "retir'd, " used in the previous stanza. The repetition of "thy" in the third stanza also echoes "I, " implying the poet's authority (Aske 1985, 105 – 07). The poet declares that he will become Psyche's "priest" and place her within his soul.

Keats brings the ideal and the real together by combining the elements of mental and physical settings. He claims that he will build a "fane" in "some untrodden region" of his "mind" where branches of thought exist instead of the real trees. However, the elements of the natural setting, such as "streams, " "birds, " "bees, " "buds, " and "stars, " are present. As Stone asserts, the final stanza includes the elements of natural beauty such as "wild-ridged mountains, " and "rosy sanctuary, "

which are combined with the imaginary rituals by the poet's "branched thoughts. " This is a perfect setting created by Keats for the goddess in which she can enjoy her eternity (1992, 71). The final stanza deals with Psyche as the soul, showing her allegorical significance. Now the poet is not thoughtless as he was when walking in the forest at the beginning of the ode, but he uses his "working brain. " He will worship the goddess through his "branched" or "shadowy thought" (Dickstein 1971, 199). The word "shadowy" may imply the fact that the human mind, unlike God's omniscience, is not capable of knowing everything.

The poet's fancy is said to be the "gardener" of the internal setting, but this very gardener imitates nature to create the imaginary setting. The imitation does not create exact copies of the actual, and this is not the intention of art either:

With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,  
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:  
And there shall be for thee all soft delight  
That shadowy thought can win,  
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,  
To let the warm Love in! (62 – 67)

The internal world which is created by fancy can be obtained by considering external realms of history and mythology (Vendler 1983, 47). The poet uses life and its elements in order to create something imaginary and ideal. He emphasizes that life and art exist together and one should not be overlooked for the sake of the other. This reciprocal relationship is also presented in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and its famous line "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " reflecting one of the main ideas of the poem. The poet stresses that poetry and art are not just fanciful practices to entertain man, but they also offer truth to him and teach lessons.

Keats uses imagination and art to place Psyche in his soul, which implies the process of "soul-making in an undiscovered country. " It allows the poet to widen his consciousness, which, in turn, results in his awareness of both pleasure and pain (Bloom 1987, 4). He is not like the bird in "Ode to a Nightingale" that is totally unaware of human "fever" and "fret. " He knows that pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, innocence and experience have meaning when they are not disunited. That is why he emphasizes the union of Psyche and Cupid: soul and body complement each other. According to Dickstein, the poet gives the goddess a "bright torch" so that she can welcome Cupid not in the darkness but in the light (1971, 201). It can be argued that the union is going to happen in the light because it is something that should be realized by man if he wants to have a complete view of life. "The reunited lovers, Cupid and Psyche, are an image of the wholeness that Keats's mature poetry will seek" (Bloom 1987, 42).

The fact that as a symbol of the soul and intellectual beauty Psyche has been neglected through the history of the human being makes her attractive to the poet. Since she has experienced sorrow and hardship, she is able to understand the sadness of the human condition, and this makes her "lovelier" than the other goddesses. The poet restores her status and presents her importance, but he does not ignore Cupid. Cupid and Psyche are presented together because they complement each other and this is one of the most significant points as far as the relation between body and soul, the actual and the spiritual, the real and the ideal is concerned. Keats shows the importance of art and poetic imagination, since it is through art that man can widen his view point. It not only entertains man but also teaches different lessons to him, the most notable of which is the coexistence of the real and the ideal.

### III . "Ode to a Nightingale": A Journey to the Ideal

Lyricism and the use of the personal pronoun is common to romanticism as it generally deals with the individual or personal experience. Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" is probably most representative of this tendency. The frequent use of the first person pronoun implies that it actually concerns a personal experience. The occasion for the composition of the ode was explained by Keats's friend, Charles Brown, as follows:

In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a continual and tranquil joy in her song; and one morning he took a chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. . . .

(In Watts 1991, 127)

All the odes that are examined in this study belong to the year 1819, which was the most productive time of Keats's poetic career. He often worked on two odes during the same week. Yet, none of them was apparently written at such a great speed as was "The Nightingale. " It should be noticed that the nightingale has been a subject for poetry since the middle ages. In addition, in classical mythology, the nightingale was a beautiful girl who was turned into a bird after she had been raped by Tereus, who cut out her tongue. Maybe the bird sings of her past life and her sad experience. Thus, it can be asserted that although as the symbol of art, she belongs to the ideal realm now, she has not completely forgotten the real world and its violence. Written at a time when the poet found his death from



tuberculosis imminent, the ode deals with the frustrations of life, but it also presents the real and the ideal, the mortal and the immortal.

It is the nightingale and its song that unite dualities and polarities. These are first presented as numbness and forgetfulness as opposed to wakefulness; sadness as opposed to happiness; life as opposed to death; and permanence as opposed to transitoriness. Moreover, the bird is a symbol of poetry and poetic inspiration, and its song helps the poet to use his imagination in order to reach the ideal. Keats then gives his ideas about the ideal and compares it with the real. Keats's personal experience of listening to the nightingale leads him once more to understand the inseparability of the actual and the ideal, the real and the imaginary. As he listens to the nightingale, he experiences the complete happiness of being with the bird spiritually. As the bird flies away, the poet's imagination fails, and he wonders whether he has been awake or asleep. One of the important points in the poem is the poet's desire to die in order to catch the moment of ecstasy forever. He is also aware of the fact that death would isolate him from the ideal as he cannot be inspired by the bird's song after his death. His desire to reach the ideal does not prevent him from forgetting the experiences of the real world: he never forgets the happiness of experiencing worldly pleasures. He tries to find a balance between the real and the ideal because they constitute the duality of human condition.

In the beginning of the poem, the reader is introduced to the poet's mood of senselessness and forgetfulness, as well as that of happiness and joy as the result of his response to the nightingale's song. His feelings of pain and sorrow create a complex mood, which is suggested by different terms and images. Words like "drowsy numbness," "hemlock," and "opiate," imply loss of sensory feelings. For instance, Hemlock is a poisonous plant which causes senselessness, and "opiate" is a drug that

induces inaction and dullness. Moreover, Lethe in classical mythology is the river of forgetfulness and "Lethe-wards" indicates the mood of slackness and inactivity. The reason and nature of the ache and pain, about which the poet talks in the first line, are also given: he is not envious of the bird's joy, but its very happiness is the cause of his delight and pleasure as well as his pain. As J. R. Watson comments, the poet's awareness of human misery enables him to recognize the nightingale's cheerfulness; however, this awareness creates pain (1992, 364):

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thine happiness,— (1– 6)

The poet is "too happy" because he knows that his gaiety and gladness, caused by following the bird spiritually, is not an everlasting experience. His depression and enjoyment blend to reflect his complex mood (Mayhead 1967, 72). One of the central conflicts in the poem is between the immortality of the bird's song and the temporariness of the poet's life, between "the earthbound listener" and "the winged bird. " The very denial of envy presents that the poet is unconscious of its presence and its "potential force" (Fitzpatrick-Hanly 1986, 633).

The bird is addressed as the "Dryad of the trees, " or the spirit of nature: it is associated with nature since it lives "among the trees, " and with the spirit or eternity as it symbolizes elements of the spiritual, such as art and poetry. The bird's song attracts the attention of the poet and makes him glad because it reminds him of the immortality of art. It also makes him sad since he knows that as a human being, he cannot grasp immortality:

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full-throated ease. (7 – 10)

"Light-winged" is the keyword here which is used to change the direction of the mood of the stanza towards "life, " "the fresh air, " and "the sunlight" which causes shadows (Leavis 1972, 230).

In the first stanza, there is a contrast between the moods and images of the first part and those of the second part. The nightingale sings in "full-throated ease, " which is in contrast with the poet's depression. The word "ease" suggests peace and easiness as opposed to the poet's feelings of pain and ache. The image of sinking in Lethe may cause a heavy effect on the reader because the river itself implies death as it exists in the underworld. Death is the dominant mood of the first part of the stanza, which is suggested by the mythical river the waters of which cause forgetfulness of the past in the dead. Norman Talbot comments that the green color and shadows create a cool setting as opposed to the heavy images of the former lines (1968, 50). The green color implies spring and rebirth of nature that are in conflict with numbness, forgetfulness, and death.

The second stanza concerns the poet's device to reach the immortal world, which is represented by that of the bird. What occasions this desire is the nightingale's easeful mood and its "melodious plot. " He expects to find such ease and peacefulness in that realm. As an agent of this transcendence, he first thinks of drinking wine:

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!

O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim: (11 – 20)

The movement towards life and its elements lasts until the last two lines where the poet wishes to leave the real world (Leavis 1972, 230). In order to join the bird, the poet has to "leave the world unseen, " which suggests being "unseen" by the world, as well as not seeing it. Therefore, he wants to "fade away, " and to "forget" the misery of human beings (In Bloom 1987, 67 – 68). Although he wants to leave the real world, he does not want to give up the earthly pleasures and that is why he longs for a wine tasting of "Flora" and "country green. " He is not going to forget the pleasure of dancing and singing Provençal songs, an act which suggests the grape harvest and consequently life and its activities. "Transferences of imagery from wine to other things, " says Talbot, is very effective in the second stanza. "Dance, " "Provençal song, " and "sunburnt mirth" are all associated with "warm South" to show what the latter is like (1968, 52). He wants to taste the warmth of the Mediterranean climate by drinking the wine, and he talks about the experience of feeling the bubbles in his mouth. The sound effect in line seventeen as a result of the repetition of the letter "b, " invites the reader to experience the "winking" of the bubbles as if he himself has drunk the wine: Keats calls for the reader's empathy in sharing this experience with him. In addition, he uses sensory imagery to emphasize the sweetness of the worldly pleasures.

The importance of worldly pleasures, the beauty and happiness that can be experienced in the actual life, is reflected elsewhere in Keats's writing. In a letter (1 May, 1819), to Fanny Keats he asserted:

O there is nothing like fine weather, and health, and Books, and a fine country, and a contented Mind, and Diligent-habit of reading and thinking, and an amulet against the ennui--and please heaven, a little claret-wine cool out of a cellar a mile deep--with a few or a good many ratafia cakes--rocky basin to bathe in, a strawberry bed to say your prayers to Flora in. . . . (In Fraser 1993, 30)

It is interesting that claret-wine is not only counted among the worldly pleasures, but also it is used as a means of overcoming ennui, or the limitations of the physical world. The poet does not want to ignore the physical and sensual experiences and the resultant enjoyment and delight, but he wants to discover the ideal realm by entering "the forest dim" in the second stanza.

The third stanza brings the real and the ideal together to compare them and to give the reason why the poet wants to leave the former and enter the latter. The real world is identified with "fever" and "fret," as well as "groan":

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan; (21 – 24)

The repetition of the letter "f" once more calls the attention of the reader to the conflict between the actual and the ideal. "Fade," "far," and "forget" indicate the poet's desire to leave the real life and its sorrows, while "fever" and "fret" hint at the painful situation of human beings. Moreover, Keats uses the word "where," which is in contrast with the bird's realm, to show the real and the actual. Man becomes old and thin, and also "grows pale" as a result of the old age or different illnesses, and finally dies. According to Walter Jackson Bate, the third Stanza refers to the death of

Tom, Keats's brother, and explains the poet's wish to leave the real world "where but to think is to be full of sorrow" (1992, 505). If man thinks of his situation, he will become helpless and hopeless as he can then realize that the world in which he lives is full of pain and sorrow:

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. (25 – 30)

Human consciousness is the main cause of man's unhappiness, and this is the poet's most accurate point in the stanza, which leads the reader to the conflict between "unhappy consciousness" and the "unconsciousness of death" (Vendler 1983, 88). In this world nothing beautiful remains the same, and the last two lines of the stanza demonstrate the poet's desire to preserve beauty in the world of mutability. It can be argued that beauty can be preserved by art as the latter can immortalize the former by giving permanence to it. The last two lines also stress the temporariness of the real world and its elements, which is one of the main causes of Keats's desire to reach the ideal world and its permanence.

In the fourth stanza, the poet decides to use his own poetic imagination and art in order to reach the ideal. He says that he does not want to be carried by Bacchus, the god of wine, but by "viewless wings" of poetry and art. This implies the fact that he does not think of alcohol as an agent of change anymore:

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards: (31 – 34)

The importance of the bird as the symbol of poetry is very clear now: like the bird, poetry has wings that enables the poet to fly, but its wings are "viewless" since it is an element of the spiritual. "Viewless wings" are similar to the "unheard melodies" in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as they are also related to the ideal. "Unheard melodies" are "sweet" because they exist without being affected by the process of time, and wings of poetry are "viewless" since art is timeless and immortal. The conflict between the real and the ideal, the body and the soul, is emphasized by "the dull brain" as opposed to "the viewless wings of poesy. " While the brain causes confusion, poesy as an element of the spiritual allows the poet to fly with the bird.

The contrast between the two worlds is also shown by different light images: The ideal world is identified with light, the happy moon, and "starry Fays"; while the real one is equated with darkness, "no light, " and "glooms":

Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways. (35 –  
40)

Once the poet is introduced to the ideal realm and its light by flying with the bird spiritually, the darkness of the real world becomes clearer to him. He cannot see the "flowers, " "the boughs, " "the grass, " "the thicket, " "the fruit tree, " "white hawthorn, " "violets, " "musk-rose, " and the "flies":

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit- tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. (41 – 50)

The picture of the real world in the darkness contrasts with that of the ideal world which is given in the previous stanza. While in the ideal world the poet can see the moon and stars, in the real one he has to guess which flowers are around him since he cannot see in "embalmed darkness. " As Talbot asserts, words such as "incense" and "embalmed" connote death and decay, and they lead the reader to the deathwish in the sixth stanza (1968, 56). Death is identified with the real world, and Keats presents the process of change in life by using a phrase like "fast fading violets. " Flowers lose their color and freshness in the same way that people grow pale, become thin, and die. "The changing seasons involve the idea of 'fast fading' violets, the passing of all beauty and harmony into death and decay, and the consequent necessity for the speaker to find some stasis" (Talbot 1968, 56). The literal meaning of the stanza is that the night has come, there is no light, and the poet cannot see the landscape. "The poet isn't up there amid moon and stars--he's down here in the gloom" (Watts 1991, 128).

In the sixth stanza, the poet thinks that maybe he can reach the bird's realm after his death while he is still in the darkness of the real world as the word "darkling" suggests. Robin Mayhead comments that although death is associated with words such as "soft" and "easeful, " the poet is half in love with this painless and peaceful death because it brings lifelessness, which prevents him from hearing the nightingale's song and then death cannot be a richness anymore (1967, 75):

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time



I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod. (51 – 60)

The poet knows that once he dies, he can never hear the song. He is also aware of the fact that he cannot separate the real and the ideal, body and soul: although he wants to perform a totally spiritual task of entering the world of the bird, he needs his body as well as his soul. In other words, he cannot get rid of his body in order to be with the bird and that is why he says that death "seems" to be a richness. According to William Walsh, death is seen as something positive at first; however, the poet moves away from the idea of death on the very edge of "dissolution" because death cancels the effect of the bird (1981, 126). Keats's idea about death, reflected in a letter he wrote to Brown (30 September, 1820), may help the reader to understand why he rejects it:

I wish for death every day and night . . . and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and Sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever (In Bate 1992, 508).

This letter shows that the poet does not want to give up life, but considering the poem it is possible to argue that he wants to combine the liveliness of the real life with the permanence of the ideal realm described as a place in which "tender is the night. "

Presenting the immortality of the bird's song and its world in the seventh stanza, the poet implies that the nightingale itself is subject to death; however, its song will live forever. The bird is the symbol of art and poetry, and it proves that art never dies although the artist is mortal: this is the kind of immortality Keats finds in art. He identifies himself with the bird, firstly because like the nightingale he sings as a poet, secondly because he can also fly by the help of his poetic inspiration and fulfilment:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. (61 – 70)

"In their own little 'passing night', like the speaker's now, emperors and peasants have heard, loved and needed this song. They have gone, but the song has not" (Talbot 1968, 59).

The timelessness of the song is underlined by mentioning people of different times listening to the song of the bird which is more of sadness than happiness. "In the ancient days, " the "emperor and clown" have heard the song while it has also found its path to the time when Ruth was exiled. While the "ancient time" suggests history, Ruth's story presents religion as the tale is written in the Bible. The same song has "charm'd magic casements" that are located in the "faery" lands, which implies the entrance of the song to the world of fancy and imagination. Thus, there are not only various people and times, but also several fields, like history,

religion, and fancy, into which the song has entered. "The last three lines of the stanza show the song's power reaching beyond all human history, beyond *The Book of Ruth*, beyond all human imaginative experience, into a mythic world" (Talbot 1968, 60). As "faery" lands suggest the world of fantasy, and as the story has opened the windows of this magical realm, the song has also influenced the listener's mind and imagination (Talbot 1968, 60). The word "forlorn" is identified with the "faery" lands to present their remoteness which implies their loneliness as a result of the fact that they are unavailable; however, the song or art in general has even succeeded in reaching these remote places.

Keats does not forget the world in which he lives, and the very loneliness in the "faery" lands reminds him of his own world and of human loneliness. The ideal realm reminds him of the real world and implies that the two worlds are inextricable. In the previous stanza, he presents "magic casements, " which are opening in the "faery" lands in the similar way that he presents "a casement ope at night, / To let the warm love in" in "Ode to Psyche. " In both cases, the window can be accepted to join or to unite the real and the ideal. He is not going to forget the realities of life or to deceive himself by fancy as he says although imagination can trick "elves, " she cannot cheat him. It can be argued that he has chosen the word "elf" because it is itself a small fairy that belongs to the world of imagination, not to that of reality. It does not know anything about the realities of the human world, so it can be misled by imagination. The fact that fancy cannot cheat the poet shows that he wants to find a balance between imagination and reality, the ideal and the real. This is very essential as far as the relation between the two is concerned:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf. (71 – 74)

The poet does not want to neglect the real world by concentrating excessively on imagination. He wants to achieve a balanced view of the relation between the real, and the ideal and this approach is reflected elsewhere: in a letter (27 February, 1818) to Taylor, Keats wrote that "Poetry should surprise by a fine excess" (In Cookson & Loughrey 1988, 67). He neither wants to ignore reality nor to preoccupy himself with the imaginary.

After traveling to the world of imagination, the poet comes back to the world of reality. The bird, as well as fancy, which had led him to the faraway lands, has gone; he is in his "sole self, " and he says adieu to the bird whose "plaintive anthem" cannot be heard completely as it is flying away:

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep? (75 – 80)

"Plaintive anthem" implies that the song is sung to the soul as an anthem is a music sung by a choir in church; however, it is a sad song now as the bird is flying away. Brian Stone observes that the word "forlorn" also means "utterly lost" which suggests the gradual death of the poet's inspiration since the bird's song can hardly be heard (1992, 78). The song is "buried deep / In the next valley-glades" so the poet cannot hear it anymore. That is why he asks whether it is a "vision" or a "dream. " Maybe he wants to show that the line between the imagination and the reality is a narrow one, and sometimes it is impossible to separate them, or perhaps he tries to emphasize that there is not an exact definition of reality. Sometimes the

imaginary can be as vivid as the real; therefore, it is not always possible to separate them: "Keats believed that the imagination of the true poet was capable not only of perceiving, but of creating essential reality" (In Hill 1992, 189). In other words, it is possible for the "true poet" to travel to the imaginary realm and come back again to the reality. Of course, he can then compare the real and the ideal to understand their relationship. " 'Do I wake or sleep'--it does not matter, because he is free to renew his journey, and to return again" (In De Almeida 1990, 244).

"Ode to a Nightingale" is a personal poem which presents the poet's response to the bird's song and his spiritual journey to the ideal realm. He becomes aware of the contrasts between the real and the ideal, once he enters the ideal world. The immortality of the nightingale's song, as an element of the ideal, contrasts with the mortality of human beings, and the bird's happiness is presented as opposed to the sorrow of the human condition. Keats knows that he lives in a world where every living being is subject to decay and death. The temporariness of the real world causes him to try to find permanence, which is the characteristic of the ideal; however, as a human being he cannot grasp immortality. He can just experience the happiness and joy of being in the ideal world by using his imagination and fancy. One of the most interesting points in the ode is that he thinks he may immortalize the spiritual experience of being one with the bird if he dies at the moment of ecstasy. Yet he is aware of the fact that death separates him from the bird and its song forever: body and soul, the real and the imagination, reality and the imaginary are inextricable. The poet tries to find a balance between the two, not to embrace one at the exclusion of the other, and this is an important point that should be kept in mind when the relation between the real and the ideal is concerned.

#### IV . "Ode on a Grecian Urn": The Coexistence of Art and Life

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" deals with the poet's desire to reach the ideal and permanent world. It concerns the poet's idea about the immortality of art versus the mortality of man, the relation between art and life, and the limitations of the real and the ideal worlds. It suggests the paradox that an art object, which is lifeless and silent, can present a world of vitality and music. The urn is made of cold marble, but suggests a world of happiness, love, and warmth. In ancient Greece and Rome, urns and vases that were made of pottery or stone were used to preserve the ashes of the dead. Although the urn by its very function is associated with death, silence, and motionlessness, the ashes, or the dusts that remain of mortal life, are in a way immortal. Besides, the scenes on the surface of the urn suggest vitality and passionate feelings. In this poem, Keats concentrates on an antique vase that displays different scenes and figures. It has been observed that the ode does not describe a particular urn, but Keats creates the object in his imagination (Jack 1967, 221). Neo-Attic marble urns portray a single scene while Keats's vase depicts different scenes. Therefore, it can be argued that the urn is an invention of the poet's imagination (Bowra 1988, 129). In nineteenth century, it was a common practice to write about an art object in poetry, and from 1810 to 1820, a work of classical art was a subject of the poetry competitions at Oxford (Jack 1967, 214 – 15). Thus, it is not surprising that Keats, who composed this ode in the spring of 1819, has chosen an object of art as the subject of this poem. Unlike human beings, the urn is not affected by time or any process of it: the scenes and figures on the vase do not change while human beings grow old and die. The immortality of the vase is contrasted with the mortality of human beings, which is one of the main themes of the poem. The poet tries to

reach the world of permanence because he is aware of the limitations of the real world; however, he knows that the ideal realm has its own limitations. Keats does not want to choose one world and give up the other, but wants to combine the two because they complement each other. The world of art is permanent, but it lacks life; actual life lacks permanence, but has liveliness. Art and life belong to two different worlds, and they are in conflict with each other, but there are also conflicts within each world. The whole poem is based on the opposite ideas and paradoxes, and through these conflicts the poet gives his ideas about art and life, the real and the ideal.

The poem begins with the introduction of contrary statements about the urn. In the first two lines, the urn is identified with "silence" and "quietness," while in the third line it is called a "historian." The figures on the urn are not able to move as they are fixed on the surface of the object, but the poet talks about a "struggle to escape" and a "mad pursuit." Furthermore, the vase is not able to make any sound, yet the poet suggests the existence of music by using words like "pipes" and "timbrels":

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: (1 – 4)

The urn is the "unravish'd bride of quietness" in the sense that it is still pure and virginal: it has not yet experienced any kind of physical and sexual union. It is called the "foster-child of silence and slow time" because the vase is not the result of any sexual and sensual relationship between "silence" and "slow time." Thus, from the beginning of the poem, the purity of the object is stressed (Mayhead 1967, 80). While the first image of the urn hints at its silence and purity, the next one shows that it is adopted by "silence" and "slow time":

As an art object it is fostered by "silence and slow time" in the sense that after its maker's (that is, parent's) death, it is nurtured by the passing of the ages and kept safe from destruction, but is also nurtured by the space of silence and slow time in which the spectator apprehends an art object (Barnard 1993, 105).

The urn is silent literally because it cannot speak, but it has a power to suggest and present tales as it shows different figures, and situations. Cedric Watts comments that the urn is a "sylvan historian" since it shows pastoral settings, and it is a historian because "it tells a story and records a cultural era" (1991, 132).

As a historian, the urn can express tales which are "sweeter" than those of a human historian since the vase induces the observer to think about the figures and events. The person observing the urn is urged not to be a passive observer but to be involved in events and actions actively, which can be possible only through his imagination. He must try to appreciate what the figures may feel, and he has to remember that he can never be sure of the identity of the figures and the location of the places in which the events happen. Each person would respond to the urn from his own point of view, and this experience of interpreting the events and actions is much more beautiful than listening passively to a human story teller. Each observer may ask different questions and may find different answers about the characters and situations that are portrayed on the vase.

In the second part of the first stanza, the poet emphasizes, in the form of questions as well as phrases, the multiplicity of these points of view or the dualities of the world represented by the urn:

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? (5 – 10)

On the vase the different scenes are edged with leaves in which different events and figures are depicted. The legend "haunts" the "shape" of the urn because the story itself is not being told by the vase. The legend is suggested by it and is created in the observer's imagination as he starts thinking about the figures and scenes. Bernard Blackstone notes:

The legend "haunts about" the shape of the urn: is, therefore, in a sense detached from it. Here is the shape, the form; and there is the legend. The form has attracted the legend to itself by the power stored up within it. The power is from eternity: the legend is within time, and functions in the world of the contraries. For note: there are two legends, the one expressing passionate desire, violent movement, "wild ecstasy"; the other expressing piety, sacrifice, ritual death (1959, 338).

The poet hints at two different worlds or two forms of existence from the beginning of the poem, in the same way that he suggests mortals and immortals, "men" and "gods," to be the possible figures on the object. " 'Tempe or the dales of Arcady' are suggested because Tempe is where Apollo and the Muses tarried when nearest to men, but Arcady is where men lived the most pastoral, untroubled and godlike lives" (Talbot 1968, 63). Tempe is identified with immortals while Arcady is associated with men. The use of contrast is elaborated between that of movement and stillness: at the end of the first stanza, the phrases "mad pursuit" and a "struggle to escape" imply the kind of action that is in contrast with the stillness of the urn. Although the vase is silent, it portrays wild scenes and shows the "struggle" of the female figures to "escape" from the male pursuers who

want to catch them. "Wild ecstasy" suggests the action and the existence of strong feelings. The poet creates action, movement, and intense feelings, which are in contrast with the "still" and "quiet" urn.

Keats starts the second stanza again with contrasting concepts and compares the ideal and the real worlds. In the first part of the stanza, the ideal realm is depicted as being superior to the physical world:

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: (11 – 14)

"Unheard melodies" are related to the spiritual while "heard melodies" are associated with the physical ear. The music of the pipes can only be heard by the spiritual ear, which is superior to the physical one. The music being played is suggested by the figures playing the pipes, and the observer has to use his imagination to hear this music, since the pipes are being played softly. Because the observer is active in responding imaginatively to the figures on the vase, the experience of listening to the "unheard melodies" is sweeter than listening passively to the "heard melodies." Robin Mayhead notes that "unheard melodies" are superior to "heard melodies" as the former please the spirit while the latter can only attract the attention of "the sensual ear" (1967, 81). In other words, "heard melodies" are the elements of the real world while "unheard melodies" are that of the ideal one. The former is temporal because once it is completed, it can never be heard again by "the sensual ear," but the latter is immortal and timeless since it can be heard constantly in the imagination. Once more, Keats shows the mortality of life and its elements as opposed to the immortality of the ideal and spiritual.

In the latter part of the second stanza, the poet sets the spiritual and the actual against each other once more; however, this time the

limitations of the ideal world are emphasized. Keats uses negative words, like "canst not, " "never, " "cannot, " and "hast not, " when he talks about the ideal. Unlike the actual world, the ideal realm has permanence, but nothing changes there. People are always young, and it is always the spring time. It is not permanence but change that is the essence of life. The second part of the stanza deals with this dilemma:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor even 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! (15 – 20)

The experience of being in the same condition forever and listening to the same music can be really very boring. The young man has to stay "beneath the trees" and to listen to the same song while the setting never changes. He is not able to reach , touch, or kiss his beloved; and there is no chance of any sexual relationship. Although there is no grief because the love relationship is not consummated, there is no "bliss" as the figures can never experience the complete happiness of experiencing sexuality. Lack of life, action, and sexuality are the limitations of the ideal world, but this realm is permanent. Love relations remain the same, and people never age. In the actual world there are action, movement, and liveliness, yet it is this very liveliness that creates temporariness. The poet does not overlook the limitations of the two worlds; however, he still identifies the ideal with happiness because the sadness and sorrow of the actual world do not exist in the other one, where happiness is permanent.

The third stanza concerns the superiority of the ideal world, depicted by the urn, over the physical realm. Happiness and joy, youth and love, are not going to change or be affected by any process of time:

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. (21 – 30)

There are "happy boughs, " "happy melodist, " and "happy love, " in the ideal world. In the world of permanence, trees and boughs are happy because autumn never comes, and it is always spring. "Happy melodies" hint at the state of the figures: they are always happy since nothing new happens to make them sad. Love remains "warm" as the figures cannot reach the climax of their love relationship while in the real world sexual relationship sometimes causes a decrease in the desire and in the warmth of the love relation. Here the contrast is between the love that is "still to be enjoy'd" and the love that has already been enjoyed. When love is not enjoyed, it remains warm because there is still the desire of attaining the beloved; but once sexuality and physical union are experienced, the result is sadness and sorrow. "His love is 'happy' precisely because it is 'still to be enjoy'd' , and will never attain consummation. By repeating 'happy', the poet stresses the unchanging continuity of this state" (Mayhead 1967, 83). The word "happy" is repeated six times in the stanza, and the state of happiness is in contrast with human love and passion, which result in "a burning forehead" and a "parching tongue. " While in the real world sexuality takes away the purity of love, in the ideal world, love is "warm" and "happy" since sexuality is not consummated. The figures on the urn

have sacrificed their lives for immortality and their passion for a happy love. They are not alive, and because of their very lifelessness, they are not subject to change or any process of time. They have become immortal; they will remain young and happy forever because their picture on the urn will never change. They cannot experience sexual union as they are fixed on the vase; therefore, their love remains happy. What the poet implies is that it is not possible to enjoy an immortal and happy love as well as sexuality and liveliness at once. One should be given up for the sake of the other.

The fourth stanza opens with an actual sacrifice in which a heifer is going to be killed in a religious ceremony:

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? (31 – 34)

The sacrifice scene portrays elements of spirituality and reality: the priest, as the religious leader, is associated with spirituality whereas the heifer belongs to the real world. According to William Walsh, Keats combines the natural world that is presented by the "green altar" with the supernatural that is suggested by "mysterious priest, " as well as with the religious devotion of the ordinary people. The natural and the supernatural create a whole, and they "are seen to be stages in an unbroken line" (1981, 123). The important point is that the poet shows the natural and supernatural, the real and the ideal, as existing together. He does not know who the people are or what the exact purpose of the ceremony is; he simply looks at the scene and realizes that they are going to kill the heifer. No exact or detailed information is given about the situations or the settings depicted on the urn.

The little town is not actually portrayed on the vase and that is why the poet asks questions about its location. "It is clear the town is not on the

urn, since it is alternatively a seaport, a river town or a mountain citadel, so Keats conjures it up in his mind while reflecting on the sacrificial scene" (Talbot 1968, 65). He gives an impression of reality to the town by claiming that no one can tell a stranger what has happened that it is empty now (In Abrams 1960; 361). Although the poet cannot see the town, he knows that it will remain silent forever because people have left it in order to attend the ritual. The ceremony will last forever and people remain unchanged, but the result of this permanence is that the town will be silent and lonely forever. Once more, Keats suggests that the permanence of the ideal world is achieved by giving up life itself:

What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
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. (35 – 40)

The poet shows that he is aware of the limitations of the ideal world: the permanence of the ritual causes the town to be deserted and "desolate." The poet imagines the town, but he will not stay in the world of imagination for a long period of time. He does not overlook the fact that the vase is a work of art and an object, not a living being.

In the last stanza, the poet looks at the urn from a different angle and addresses the vase as an object:

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! (41 – 45)

"Shape, " "attitude, " "marble men and maidens, " and "form," suggest that the urn is now being identified with lifelessness:

Instead of an "unravish'd bride of quietness, " the urn has become an "Attic shape"; instead of a "foster-child of silence and slow time, " a "Fair attitude" – "with *brede* / Of *marble* men and maidens *overwrought*, " a reminder that the urn is only an artifact (Hopkins 1986, 129).

Mayhead argues that the most important point in the ode is given in the last stanza where the poet addresses the vase as "Cold Pastoral. " The urn is cold because it is an object, and it is made of cold substances; nevertheless, the permanence of the vase is the result of its very coldness and lifelessness. The eternity of the object is in contrast with the mortality of men, which is the direct result of their liveliness (1967, 79 – 80). Keats does not try to choose art or life, and he does not want to give up life for the sake of art. He knows that the figures on the vase are lifeless. When he talks about their "warm" and "panting love, " he combines the permanence of the world of art with the liveliness and warmth of humanity. Although a work of art is immortal, it lacks life; life is full of liveliness and things which are of value in themselves despite the sorrows and difficulties. The urn is identified with eternity because of its permanence; however, the poet wishes to combine this eternity with life. One of the reasons why the vase "teases" the beholder may be that it suggests the ideal condition of having permanence and life together. The poet, like the beholder knows that this is quite impossible (Mayhead 1967, 84 – 85).

Although there is a contrast between the cold and immortal world, and the warm and mortal human beings, the urn is said to be "a friend to man. " In addition, "this generation" represents the generation to which the poet belongs while "other woe" implies the misery of another group of people to come. Thus, the urn has been a friend of different generations:

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. (46 – 50)

The last two lines of the poem have been the cause of debate among the critics. These lines give the poet's idea about the relation between beauty and truth, art and life, the ideal and the real.

According to Keats, beauty and truth should not be separated because they complement each other. This idea is reflected in a letter (22 November, 1817) to Benjamin Bailey: "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination--What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth--whether it existed before or not--. . ." (In Fraser 1993, 30). One thing is clear: the truth is not only associated with life, but it also refers to the truth of imagination and art. Art can reflect life in the same way that the urn as a historian portrays pastoral scenes and love relationships; therefore, art is a kind of truth in this situation. As Charles Patterson notes, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " suggests the truth of art because it can catch some of the elements of the reality and fix them forever. The urn suggests something about humanity and life, as well as art (1970, 179 – 81). Beauty refers to the world of art, which is an ideal world while truth reflects the real world. From the beginning of the ode, Keats shows his desire to combine these two realms because they complement each other. There is a reciprocal relationship between beauty and truth, art and life: one cannot exist without the other. Art exists because it reflects life in objects or in literature, and it is through art that man can learn about his ancestors, their ideas, and their lives. By reading different novels and poems people can understand something about the culture, custom, religion, belief, and history of their own



ancestors as well as those of other nations. Life and art are inseparable, and this is implied by equating beauty with truth.

Cleanth Brooks argues that the ambiguity of the equation warns the reader to stop interpreting the statement in isolation. The whole poem contains conflicts and paradoxes, which are conveyed in the form of oxymorons. The urn tells a story, but it is also silent; while the figures on the vase are fixed, they sing and play music. If the reader has really understood all of the paradoxes in the poem, he should not be surprised by the final conflict. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " argues about the nature of the urn as an art object. It portrays a few scenes which are not only beautiful, but also true because they show the history of human beings (In Fraser 1993, 143 – 44). As an object of art, the vase belongs to the ideal world, since it is permanent and timeless. However, permanence and timelessness are meaningless if man does not know what change is. Change as the most important quality of life, belongs to the real realm, and it is in this world that man experiences sadness, illness, and despair. If man does not have such experiences, he can never understand what happiness, health, and hope are. Man should experience the "real" in order to realize what the "ideal" is. J. R. Watson argues that the poet combines two different and contradictory concepts, art and life, in the last two lines. When he looks at the vase, he knows that its beauty is permanent because time has no effect on the object; however, the poet is aware of the fact that beyond the world of permanence, which is presented by the urn, there is the world of reality that is full of sorrow as well as joy. Keats brings these realms together to show that they coexist (1992, 370). The ideal and the actual are in contrast with each other, but this is because of this very contrast that man can realize the impossibility of isolating them.

Keats's oxymoronic vision, which is best expressed in "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " cannot force credibility unless the line is considered

within the context of the poem, as well as the context of Keats's earlier writing. T. S. Eliot has found this statement virtually meaningless:

This line strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem, and the reason must be either that I fail to understand it, or that it is a statement which is untrue. And I suppose that Keats meant something by it, however remote his truth and his beauty may have been from these words in ordinary use. . . .The statement of Keats seems to me meaningless; or perhaps the fact that it is grammatically meaningless conceals another meaning from me (In Fraser 1993, 128).

It can be argued that Keats uses the words "beauty" and "truth" quite denotatively although they also have platonic connotations. As a person who has experienced sorrows and difficulties, he knows that truth is not always beautiful; however, it is through experiencing sadness and despair that the meaning of happiness and hope can be appreciated. Life is full of paradoxes: happiness and joy exist together with sadness and sorrow, and it is impossible to separate them as they have no meaning in isolation. Keats is capable of looking at life as a system of conflicts and contradictions, and this is facing the truth of life. Quiller-Couch considers the lines to be " a vague observation--to anyone whom life has taught to face facts . . . actually an *uneducated* conclusion, albeit most pardonable in one so young and ardent " (In Bate 1992, 517). Quintin accepts the statement to be absurd if the urn is talking to human beings and points out that the vase is "a friend to man" because it allows him to run away from the real world to that of art in which "Beauty is truth" (In Fraser 1993, 123). Beauty is, however, truth in the real world because beauty is something that can be felt. If something can be felt, it can be truth. "And if beauty is reality, the converse is likewise true, that reality, the reality of intense human

experience, of suffering, can also yield beauty, in itself and in art" (In Abrams 1960, 335).

It is the use of punctuation and the identity of the speaker in these problematic lines that give rise to much of the controversy. There are different approaches to the problem and various ideas about the function of the quotation marks. As Watts comments, the punctuation of the last lines should be as follows:

' "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " –that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. '

The punctuation shows that the whole of the last two lines are spoken by the urn. "Ye" is used because the urn as a superior being talks to the inferior and mortal beings. The statement "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " is quoted since the urn itself has learned it as it has passed from one generation to another (1991, 134 – 35). Considering the actual punctuation, in the second part of the last stanza, it is possible to say that the poet talks to the urn and addresses the object as "Cold Pastoral" and "a friend to man, " and this very friend says the last two lines to man. In keeping with Watts's idea, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " is quoted because the vase has gained this wisdom through the years of communication with man. Thus, the actual punctuation may suggest that the urn is talking to mankind in the last two lines. These lines become meaningful when the relation between art and life is taken into consideration. Then "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, " is "all" that man needs to know; otherwise, man needs to know many other concepts, such as goodness, justice, objectivity, charity, and the like.

Another critic who also claims that the last two lines are spoken by the urn is Walter Jackson Bate. He claims that in the transcripts of George Keats, Brown, Woodhouse, and Dilke, the last two lines do not contain any quotation marks, which supports the fact that these lines are a message

from the vase to man (1992, 516). John Barnard indicates that in *Annals of the Fine Arts* and in Brown's transcript there are no quotation marks. Thus, the implication is that these lines are spoken by the urn, but they "are not necessarily supported by the speaker" (1993, 107). G. S. Fraser argues that Keats is talking to the figures on the urn:

If he is addressing the figures on the urn there is no real puzzle; the truth and beauty, the existence and value, of figures in a work of art *are* identical. The whole poem has been saying that these figures are caught in a moment of stasis, free from human pain and struggle. The implication is that though art's message of some sort of ultimate identity of the true and the beautiful, the real and the ideal, makes art a "friend to man" , still *we*, "this generation" , as opposed to *ye*, the figures on the urn, need to know a great deal more than this, though we need to know this too. That was essentially how Matthew Arnold took it (1993, 24).

If Keats is talking to the urn, the last two lines can be interpreted in another way: as an art object, the urn concerns the relation between art and human beings, and this is the only thing, or "all, " that it knows and needs to know. Whether the urn is talking to man or the poet is talking to the urn, the last two lines present the relation between art and life, the ideal and the real. The lines should not be isolated from the context of the poem; otherwise they would become meaningless.

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" brings the realms of the ideal and the actual together to show that although they are in conflict with each other, they cannot exist separately because one gains meaning when compared with the other. On the one hand, there is the real world of change and temporariness in which people can experience love, passion, and joy, as well as sadness and despair. On the other, there is the ideal world in which the figures always remain happy and young, and love is forever "warm. "

Although the real world is full of liveliness, it lacks permanence while the ideal world lacks life, in spite of its permanence. However punctuated, the last two lines of the poem sum up the reciprocal relationship between the real and the ideal, between life and art. From the beginning to the end, Keats shows the differences between the two realms, as well as their limitations, to show that these worlds can be fully appreciated when they are not disunited. He concludes that these worlds complement each other, and the urn is "a friend to man" as it helps him to learn that life and art exist together. This is the only thing that man needs to know when he deals with the relationship between the real and the ideal.

## V . "Ode on Melancholy": An Inevitable Experience of Life

In "Ode on Melancholy" Keats deals with the complex nature of melancholy and the ways of responding to it by means of presenting metaphorical patterns, contrasts, and paradoxes. Although he may have Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in mind, Keats does not regard melancholy as a disease, but as an inevitable element of life that must be accepted and experienced willingly. In addition, he uses sensory imagery--senses of seeing, hearing, taste, and touch to call the reader's attention to the ambiguous nature of melancholy; a fact that he would ordinarily never notice. The poet introduces a series of contrasts, such as death and life, sorrow and happiness, pain and pleasure, melancholy and joy, to assert that these contrary elements of life are inextricable because they complement each other. "Ode on Melancholy" can be associated with the other odes as they all discuss the inseparability of the real and the ideal, the dualities of the elements of the actual life. In contrast to the earlier odes, Keats does not concentrate on a dominant symbol, and he does not prefer an ideal or an imaginary world to the real realm. Instead, he views life itself and accepts melancholy as a real life experience. Like most experiences of life, it has a duality of its own; sadness and happiness are two different but inseparable halves of the whole. Man should be aware of the fact that life is full of paradoxes and dualities which should be realized and understood completely if he wants to comprehend the complex relationship between the real and the ideal. One of the central ideas of the poem is that man may embrace joy and pleasure, but he has to be prepared enough to face pain and grief as well because they complete the life experience. The poet expounded this view in a letter (14 February–3 May, 1819) he wrote to George and Georgiana Keats:

This is the world--thus we cannot expect to give way many hours to pleasure--Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting--While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events--while we are laughing it sprouts it grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck--Even so we have leisure to reason on the misfortunes of our friends; our own touch us too nearly for words (In Cook 1990, 464).

Keats claims that only the person who is capable of accepting the coexistence of sorrow and joy can really understand the nature of melancholy. By means of personification of melancholy in the final stanza, he suggests that this person will be able to see the goddess Melancholy face to face, and he can become her devotee.

"Ode on Melancholy" originally began with the following stanza which was canceled by the poet:

Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones,  
And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,  
Stitch shrouds together for a sail, with groans  
To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast;  
Although your rudder be a dragoon's tail  
Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,  
Your cordage large uprootings from the skull  
Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail  
To find the Melancholy--whether she  
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull. (In Bloom 1987, 13)

According to Harold Bloom, Keats excluded the initial stanza as he did not want to destroy the poem's harmony by focusing on "the useless quest after 'the Melancholy'." Bloom claims that by canceling the stanza, the poem "lost a grim humor that finds only a thin echo at the poem's close"

(1987, 13 – 14). Brian Stone believes that by excluding the stanza, Keats creates "a more measured and insidiously personal stanza," which begins with negative commands (1992, 86). Words and phrases, such as "dead men's bones, " "phantom, " "skull, " and "Lethe, " refer to death; and it can be argued that if the poet had not canceled the stanza, there would have been too many conventional symbols linking melancholy with death, which would have created an impression against his actual aim. Douglas Bush points out that the traditional symbols refer to "simple melancholy" while "the wakeful anguish of the soul" suggests "a more profound melancholy, " which results from human awareness of temporariness of beauty. Thus, the initial stanza is canceled because otherwise the images of "simple melancholy" would conceal those of "profound melancholy" (1966, 145).

In its existing version, Keats begins the poem with symbols and images that suggest forgetfulness, numbness, and death and refers to poisons which destroy human consciousness; the gloomy images of death are to be dismissed later. Therefore, the mood of the first stanza may be accepted to be similar to that of "Ode to a Nightingale" in which forgetfulness, slackness, and death are introduced, later to be subordinated to the images of immortality. Unlike "Ode to a Nightingale, " "Ode on Melancholy" is not a personal poem, but the poet's message concerns all men in that the painful aspects of life should not be avoided by resorting to death or forgetfulness. He uses negative words like "no" and "nor" to warn the reader against making attempts to escape from melancholy, and he stresses that life and everything related to it--including melancholy--should be faced calmly and bravely. The listener is advised not to choose the river of oblivion, the poisonous herbs, the insects, and the owl:

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist

Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;



Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd

By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine; (1 – 4)

This warning, emphasized by the recurrence of "no" and "nor, " is a "protest" against the conventional symbols of melancholy and death that are given in the opening stanza (Bate 1992, 522). In keeping with Walter Jackson Bate's idea, it should be pointed out that melancholy should not simply be identified with death: the reader is warned against the symbols since linking melancholy only with death does not give a complete idea about its true nature. There are various symbols and allusions that are associated with death or forgetfulness in the stanza. "Lethe" refers to forgetfulness as in classical mythology it is a river that exists in the underworld and the waters of which cause the dead to forget everything about their past lives. "Wolf's-bane, " and "nightshade" are both poisonous plants that cause death, and Keats emphasizes their deadly effects by identifying the former with a "poisonous wine" and the latter with "ruby grape of Proserpine. " According to Greek mythology, Proserpine or Persephone is the goddess of the underworld and wife of Hades; therefore, her grape refers to a fruit which causes death when it is eaten. The word "bane" means death or the cause of death; thus, "Wolf's-bane" refers to a poison that can even kill a wolf. The two herbs are also identified with dullness and lack of consciousness as from the former a poisonous wine can be obtained while the latter is said to be grape of Persephone, and it is from grape that wine is produced. The image of wine has also been used in "Ode to a Nightingale, " in which it is similarly associated with an agent of change that causes forgetfulness. The three symbols "Lethe, " "Wolf's-bane, " and "nightshade" have one important characteristic in common in their strong and destructive effects on human mind and consciousness. But Keats advises the reader to avoid these.

The next lines of the stanza present "yew-berries" and "death-moth" which are also symbols of death. Once more the poet toys with the idea of death, only to warn his listeners against choosing them:

Make not your rosary of yew-berries,  
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be  
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl  
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;  
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,  
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul. (5 – 10)

"Yew-berries" are poisonous berries of a tree which is a symbol of death, since it usually grows in graveyards: it is clear how successfully the poet chooses a suitable image as it refers to both poison and death at the same time. "The beetle, " as well as the owl, are creatures of darkness; and they might easily remind the reader of graveyards and tombs, and consequently of death. "Death-moth" is an insect which is said to have a mark like the human skull on its back. Keats also talks about Psyche or soul in the stanza and warns the reader not to allow "the beetle, " "the death-moth, " and "the downy owl" to become his "mournful Psyche" or to choose suicide as a means of escape. "The death-moth" cannot take the place of the butterfly, which is associated with Psyche. This implies the danger of thinking of suicide as a response to melancholy and presents the fact that the human soul cannot reach the ideal by accepting such a death; a spiritual development is only possible when man experiences melancholy with full consciousness. Here the poet is dealing with the process of "soul-making" and educating the spirit, which is one of the main subjects of "Ode to Psyche. " Like the goddess Psyche, the human soul can reach the ideal through experiencing suffering, torment, and tribulation. As Bate asserts, although the wakefulness of the spirit might result in agony and grief, this very awareness should be experienced (1992, 522).The last two lines of the

stanza hint at the fact that the nature of melancholy has always been unknown to man. That is why the poet identifies it with "shade" and stresses that man should learn to face it, not to "shade" it. In the opening stanza, Keats rejects suicide as it results in "the wrong kind of 'shade' "; as the word refers to the soul too. The poet puns on the word "shade" since it is first used to present the ambiguous nature of melancholy, then to refer to the ghost of a dead person (Barnard 1993, 113).

In the second stanza, melancholy is treated as a passing mood or "fit" that comes suddenly and unexpectedly:

But when the melancholy fit shall fall  
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,  
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,  
And hides the green hill in an April shroud; (11 – 14)

Melancholy is said to be like a cloud that causes an April rain or tears which, like the rain, have a soothing and productive effect. The word "foster" indicates growth and development, and the rain may therefore cause "the droop-headed flowers" to grow. However, the word "shroud" refers to both storm and death, thus hints at the destructive force of the same rain, the effect of which is totally in contrast with the former one. By bringing two different and contrary effects of the same cloud together, the poet shows that like an "April shroud," melancholy can be both constructive and destructive, productive and unproductive, helpful and dangerous, pleasurable and painful. Stone identifies the melancholy which is presented in the first stanza as a false or "black" melancholy and declares that the one which is associated with an "April shroud" is the "true" melancholy: "The enriching power of true melancholy (I use 'true' as Keats would) shows at once in the way it is characterized as fertilizing rain, the floral and scenic consequences of which spread with a wealth of lovely images through seven lines" (1992, 87). An "April shroud" is an oxymoron because it brings

two opposite ideas together; with April referring to spring, rebirth of nature, and life, and shroud hinting at darkness and death. The poet uses the oxymoron to warn the reader not to consider melancholy with pain and death, but also with pleasure and life. This is looking at life from two different sides, which is seen as the only way by which man can achieve a complete view of the truth and the actual. As William Walsh states, melancholy is suggested to be a "positive and creative influence" or "a condition of creation"; therefore, it should not simply be identified with the anesthetic and "conventional" images that are shown in the first stanza (1981, 130).

Keats then offers the ways of responding to the "fit, " and he advises the sufferer to "glut" on a beautiful and natural flower like "a morning rose" or to concentrate on "the rainbow of the salt sand-wave" or on the "globed peonies. " The word "glut" implies that the reader should intensify his emotion and focus his attention on beauty which is not permanent. The poet asks the sufferer to perform such a task because the practice allows man to realize and to face the complex relationship that exists between pleasure and pain, joy and sadness, life and death: these are two conflicting parts of a whole system and as they complement each other, they cannot be disunited. This practice shows that man may feel happiness by considering a beautiful thing or an event, but this very happiness coexists with pain as he knows that the beauty of the flower or the event is temporary. As in "Ode to a Nightingale, " man's awareness of his own mortality and the temporariness of life are the causes of his pain and sorrow, but it is through the temporariness of the actual that the permanence of the ideal can be comprehended. Similarly, it is through experiencing melancholy that man can understand what happiness is. Keats's suggestions for overcoming melancholy are intensified by the use of sensory imagery:

Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,  
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,  
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;  
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,  
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,  
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. (15 – 20)

He refers to the "morning rose" to suggest its beauty, freshness, and vitality, then invites the reader to project his feeling into the flower to enjoy the beauty, to feel the freshness, and to smell the scent. He encourages the reader to see the different colors of the rainbow, to taste the salty water, and to touch the pieces of sand as well as the "globed" petals of the peonies. The poet again uses sensory imagery when he presents the angry mistress: it seems as if the reader can experience the intensity of the emotion, look at the angry woman, touch her "soft hand, " listen to her "rave, " and feed "upon her peerless eyes. " According to John Barnard, the man's indifference to the mistress's emotion may appear to be "sadistic, " but it shows an instance of "Keatsian intensity" (1993, 114).

As the anger and the act of raving of the mistress suggest wild emotion and action, the reader may remember the figures of the lovers in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and the dual aspects of love. Keats's letter (14 February–3 May 1819) to George and Georgiana, reveals his idea about the magnificent liveliness of strong emotions and actions: "Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel " (In Cook 1990, 465). The repetition of the word "deep, " in line twenty, attracts the reader's attention once more to the word "glut" as they both create the similar image of over-filling with intense emotion (In Cookson & Loughrey 1988, 75). Considering the imagery in Keats's poems, Leavis argues that the tactual effects are characteristics of his poetry and hints at his "strong grasp upon

actualities--upon things outside himself" (1972, 244). In keeping with Leavis's idea, it can be argued that Keats wants his reader to experience the "grasp" upon the realities as he has to have a complete view of life in order to comprehend what the spiritual is.

In the last stanza, melancholy is personified as a goddess who lives "in the very temple of Delight" with "Beauty, " "Joy, " and "Pleasure":

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;  
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,  
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:  
Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,  
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue  
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;  
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,  
And be among her cloudy trophies hung. (21 – 30)

Barnard claims that the mistress who appears in the second stanza, the actual woman, is also the goddess Melancholy presented in the final stanza:

Focused back on the earlier lines, the mistress is to be seen as both an actual mistress and the goddess. While this syntactical ambiguity helps some of the way, it does not altogether answer the original objection and raises another. Ought a lover allow his mistress to rave while he feeds on her eyes? Is it in character for the goddess Melancholy to lose her temper and 'rave' at her devotee? (1993, 114).

It can be argued that the mistress in the second stanza is not the goddess: the actual woman presents a feminine and mortal beauty and that is why the poet asks the sufferer to "glut" on it. This is the very temporariness of

the beauties shown in the second stanza that will help him to comprehend the inseparability of melancholy and joy.

The goddess Melancholy presents the emotion which is temporary; but the goddess herself is immortal and because of her immortality, she is not the actual mistress. As Stone indicates, the "She" at the beginning of the final stanza may be thought to be the "raving mistress" at first, yet the pronoun does not refer to the mistress, but to the goddess (1992, 87). It is interesting that the goddess is said to live in the company of "Beauty, " "Joy, " and "Pleasure, " because like melancholy, they are complex and they coexist with their counterparts. Keats says that beauty "must" die, and this refers to transitoriness of beauty as it is subject to the process of time. Moreover, joy is personified as a man whose hand is at his lips as a sign of good-bye: saying good-bye refers to the temporariness of the emotion, and the gesture hints at the fact that joy will be inevitably replaced by sorrow. The oxymoron "aching Pleasure" refers to the coexistence of pleasure and pain:

There is a double simultaneity in Keats's ambivalence of sensation; the rich pleasure can in the moment of its achievement become a poisoned satiation, and one man's pleasure can be another man's poison--this, a matter of the angle of vision or of an experience which we can in a way enter into with perilous facility (Ricks 1990, 144).

The oxymoron also refers to the fact that these emotions can take each other's place: right after portraying joy as a man, Keats introduces "aching Pleasure, " the pleasure that turns to "poison, " to show "the rhythm of sexual experience. " The images hint at sexual relationship and its direction, starting with pleasure and joy, and ending in pain and sadness (Stone 1992, 87). The poet again declares that sexuality causes a decrease in the warmth of love and in the desire of the lovers and that sexual union ends in

sadness. This attitude would remind the reader of the dualities presented in "Ode to Psyche" and in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Keats's awareness of inseparability of joy and sorrow is, according to Barnard, an "oxymoronic realization," (1993, 112) which is most notable in the last stanza:

The idea is of the intensity of joy being dependent upon a sense of its passing. As soon as we know that we are experiencing joy, it has begun to decay. Or to put it another way, this anguished wakeful parting with Joy is complementary to Keats's yearning to reach the world of pure poetry, the ideal. They are twin aspects of Keats's sense of exclusion, of alienation, from pure being, but are here recognised as integral to knowledge. Knowledge brings sorrow, so in a sense sorrow is knowledge and beauty is sorrow (1993, 115).

The coexistence of misery and delight is suggested through the metaphor "bee-mouth sips": the sweet nectar of the flowers, which is sucked by the bee, exists together with the poison. The metaphor hints at a pleasure that turns to bitterness as the nectar itself is used by the metabolism of the insect's body to produce poison. "The bee-mouth is a surprising image, a tiny mouth with a hint of instinctual intensity and a hidden sting. Nature does not always poison as the bee-mouth sips; but at the heart of melancholy the poisoning of natural pleasure is a constant threat" (Fitzpatrick-Hanly 1986, 630).

At the end of the ode, Keats shows melancholy to be "veil'd," to emphasize that it is an emotion about which man does not have a complete knowledge, and only the man who is determined, active, and sensitive, can understand that life is full of paradoxes. Once man experiences happiness, he should be courageous enough to face the fact that cheer and bliss are not permanent; sooner or later they will be replaced by distress and sorrow, and that is why the poet says that man's spirit will "taste the



sadness of her might. " Those who succeed in becoming the goddess's devotees are identified with "her cloudy trophies, " which suggest that they are now more like objects than human beings. The shift from the world of humanity or the real world, to the world of permanence or the ideal realm, once more presents the poet's desire to reach the ideal, and this reminds the reader of "Ode On a Grecian Urn, " in which an antique vase is suggested to be eternal as time has no effect on it. The trophies in this ode have many things in common with the Grecian urn as they are objects of art, unaffected by any process of change and decay. According to Stone, "cloudy trophies" refer to the spirits and other trophies that are offered to Melancholy who is regarded as the goddess directing "true feelings" (1992, 87 – 88).

"Ode on Melancholy" gives a complete view of the nature of melancholy and warns the reader not to consider this psychological state as a total mood of despair, darkness, and death. Keats presents conventional symbols of melancholy in the opening stanza, natural and sensory imagery in the second, and finally personifies melancholy as a goddess in the last stanza. He argues that melancholy can be both constructive and destructive, life-giving and life-taking like an "April shroud. " Thus, identifying melancholy only with grief, pain, and death does not give a complete view of it to man. As a result, he rejects the conventional symbols of the opening stanza and claims that the human soul can reach a spiritual development when it experiences melancholy. Man will be able to comprehend what melancholy is when he realizes joy as well, and that is why Keats asks the reader to concentrate on beautiful flowers, the rainbow, and the beautiful mistress. The poet shows that melancholy and joy exist together; looking at a beautiful object, feeling the beauty of natural events, or experiencing the moments of ecstasy are all enjoyable, but the temporariness of the beauties causes pain and sorrow. Thus, the

best way to deal with melancholy is to accept the fact that pleasure and happiness, coexist with grief and sorrow, and they are inseparable parts of a whole. Considering the relation between the two, Levinson comments: "What Keats describes is not the condition of knowing yourself numb to pain, as at the dentist, but the pleasure of pleasure-mastery: 'the pain alone, the joy alone, distinct', but occupying the same psychic space and providing each other's constitutive limits" (1990, 78).

## VI . "To Autumn": Acceptance and Enjoyment of the Real

"To Autumn" is the last of Keats's major odes which shares some similar ideas and themes with the spring odes although it was written in September 1819. The poem belongs, however, to the spring odes as far as the spirit and quality are concerned. As in "Ode on Melancholy, " there is no dominant symbol in the poem, but it moves from the images of ripeness to autumnal activities, then to the music of the season in the same way that sensory imagery starts with the sense of touch and continues with those of sight and hearing. Keats does not attempt to combine the permanence of the ideal realm with the liveliness of the actual one but considering life, he accepts natural process of time and enjoys the beauty which is offered to him by the real world. His response to the beauty of autumn is reflected in a letter (21 September, 1819) to J. H. Reynolds:

How beautiful the season is now--How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather--Dian skies--I never lik'd stubble fields so much as now--Aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm--in the same way that some pictures look warm--this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it  
(In Cook 1990, 493).

As in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " "To Autumn" suggests that actual life is not permanent because time passes; however, it is through the passing of time that man can understand what change is. Everything in nature moves towards ripeness and maturity; and the poet hints at the fact that death is inevitable, but implies that it is also a natural phenomenon in the pattern of life. Keats presents the beauty of autumn as the " beauty that must die, " yet it is interesting that he preserves this

very beauty by immortalizing it in his poem. Once more, he shows his belief in the permanence of "beauty that must die" as he catches it at a perfect moment and portrays it in his verse.

The poem begins with an apostrophe, an address to autumn, who cooperates with the sun to ripen fruits, crops, and nuts, and who also gives life to the flowers so that the bees will be able to fill their honeycombs with the nectars. The union of the sun and the season is suggested by the word "conspiring"; and the sun is identified with a masculine force, whereas autumn is associated with a feminine power. Keats presents the earth's power of producing fruits, grains, and nuts, thus shows mother-earth as the goddess who is celebrated in the poem. The opening stanza presents the results of the union:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells. (1 – 11)

The first stanza underlines the idea of "mellow fruitfulness" and "has a mouth-filling, mouth-watering sumptuousness" as a result of Keats's use of descriptive words, alliteration, assonance, tactile and visual imagery (Watts 1991, 139). It can be argued that the poet invites the reader to conceptualize the touch or the smell of the gourd that is swelled, the hazel shells that are plumped with "a sweet kernel, " and the "clammy cells" that

are full of honey. He makes the reader visualize the apple trees whose branches are bent because of the weight of the fruits. Repetition of the letter "m" in the first line; of the letter "i" in the third; of "f" in the sixth; and of "s" in the eighth attract the reader's attention once more to the idea of "mellow fruitfulness." Keats uses verbs, such as "to load," "to bless," "to bend," "to fill," "to swell," "to plump," and "to set," to present the effect of the two forces on nature. According to Stuart A. Ende, the poet puns on "maturing sun" as it also suggests "the son who is maturing": the poet has learned to "conspire" with Autumn and sees that she ripens fruits and crops, a ripening which will end in death (1976, 143).

The poet hints at the two sides of the season as in the way that he shows two different characteristics of melancholy in "Ode on Melancholy"; yet unlike in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn," he does not consider the impossible task of combining the liveliness of the actual with the permanence of the ideal, but shows his acceptance and enjoyment of life as it really is. While the first stanza portrays the process of development and growth in nature, the second one refers to autumnal activities. From describing the process of developing and maturing of the fruits, grains, and nuts, the poet shifts to demonstrating the human efforts of reaping and gleaning the crops, as well as producing fruit juice, all through the personification of autumn:

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,

Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook

Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours. (12 – 22)

The first picture shows autumn most likely as a woman sitting carelessly on a "granary floor" while her hair is lifted by "the winnowing wind. " This image may be inspired by the myth of Psyche and Cupid since in *The Golden Ass*, it is suggested that the first difficult task that is ordered by Venus is that Psyche should separate "a great quantitie of wheate, barley, mill, popy seede, peason, lintels, and beanes . . . mingled . . . altogether on a heape. " Psyche does not perform the task as she believes it to be impossible, but she sits and says nothing while her hair is "soft-lifted" by the wind (Jack 1967, 236). Autumn is also personified as a reaper who is sleeping on a "half-reap'd furrow" and who is "drows'd with the fume of poppies" so that he cannot complete his task. It is a gleaner who is carrying her load while she tries to maintain her balance and a worker who is watching the last drops of the liquid dropping from the machine. One of the most interesting parts of the poem is the sound effect achieved when Keats shows the third figure who is trying to "steady" her "laden head across a brook. " Cedric Watts observes:

The inversion of the first metrical foot of the second line, shifting the heavy stress from the second to the first syllable, creates an irregularity or syncopation at "Steady" which gives way to regularity with "thy laden head across a brook" , so that we experience, as we read, a temporary loss of balance and a restoration of it: this helps us to imagine a weighted person overcoming an obstacle(1991, 140).

Despite the brief association of the sun with a masculine figure and autumn with a feminine one, critics offer varying views about the gender in these personifications. It is argued that autumn is accepted to be masculine

traditionally in Latin, French, German, and English. (Watts 1991, 139 – 40); however, Brian Stone sees the first and the third personifications of the season as females, the second as a male, while he points out that the last one might be either a man or a woman (1992, 126). John Barnard indicates that Autumn moves between being a male or a female since reaping is a task that is done by men while gleaning is usually performed by women and children (1993, 139). It can be argued that the poet stresses the human activities in the season, and the relationship that exists between man and nature, man and actual life; thus, it does not matter if the figure is a male or a female. This is one of the main ideas of the poem: actual life exists with its activities and temporal characteristics; therefore, man should face it, accept it, and enjoy it as it actually is. The first picture might suggest that the crops are harvested and nothing is left to be done; but it might imply that Autumn is resting carelessly, although the task of harvesting has not been finished. The other pictures portray the actions that are going to be completed, that are close to the end, but have not come to the end. The reason might be that the poet wants to call the reader's attention to a movement towards the final step or to a progression and completion. Autumn is continuing to do her last tasks before winter comes; similarly, human beings grow up and become mature physically and spiritually, before death comes. When considered from another perspective, it is possible to claim that the one who is sitting on the floor, the reaper, and the worker who is watching "the last oozings" have another characteristic in common: they are at a standstill, postponing action. As Ian Jack states, the stillness and inactiveness of the figures are very important because personification of autumn in this way brings motionlessness to the poem and makes the reader move to the granary, then to the field, to the place near the brook, and finally to the cyder-press, so that he can find and see autumn (1967, 238 – 39).

The final stanza opens with two questions to autumn and hints at a loss since the songs of the spring cannot be heard in autumn. The idea of the temporariness of life and inevitability of death is implied in the end of the second stanza. Right after presenting the *ubi sunt* questions, the poet consoles the reader that although the freshness of spring is lost, autumn has its own music and its own birds singing:

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river shallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies. (23 – 33)

"The small gnats mourn, " the lambs bleat loudly, the crickets sing, the robins whistle, and the swallows "twitter in the skies, " but most of these sounds are mournful. There is a contrast between the imagery of the first stanza and that of the last: the former is associated with ripening and developing, while the latter implies death through the use of "wailful" and "mourn. " In the first stanza the sun is "strong, " whereas the final stanza refers to the hours that are passing to "the soft-dying day" and the sunset. Thus, the poem is not only rich in portraying the process of life, but also in presenting the theme of mortality and transitoriness of life, which is also dealt with in the spring odes (In Fraser 1993, 187). According to Stone, Keats takes the reader into the "acceptance of autumn's essential farewell, with its suggestion of death, " in the final stanza by uniting "the supernal"



with "the natural and physical. " The "supernal" is presented in the process of change and time; the sky is changing as well as the earth, and winter is coming. The "natural and physical" are suggested by presenting the fields that are full of the crops, as well as the creatures that are mature and powerful, the insects whose lives depend on "the autumnal warmth and food supply, " the birds like robins that will face the coming winter, and the swallows that shall leave the country before winter arrives (1992, 127). " To Autumn " is in keeping with the spring odes because it also deals with "beauty that must die": winter will come inevitably and take away the beauty of autumn; however, it is through time that man can realize change, which is the essence of life. Like melancholy, autumn has two different sides as it brings life while it also reminds man of death. " 'To Autumn'--and it is this which makes its calm poise a thing of such dignity--is a poem of parting: the parting of the day, the parting of the swallows, the parting of Autumn, the parting from life" (Ricks 1990, 212).

Unlike the way he does in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " the poet does not travel to the ideal world through his fancy and imagination in "To Autumn. " Instead, he appreciates life and its activities, as well as the beauty which is offered to man by actual life. The poem presents Keats's acceptance and enjoyment of life and its process of change. As in "Ode on Melancholy, " in which the poet shows two sides of melancholy, this poem demonstrates two aspects of the season: it brings ripeness to fruits, grains, and nuts, but foretells the coming of winter and death. The progression of the crops and fruits can be said to be similar with man's movement towards maturity and death, which is seen as a natural phenomenon by the poet. Autumn is the time when life's activities come to the fullest, when death itself can be realized to be a part of natural process of life. Keats implies that man should try to develop himself, move towards his aims, and reach fulfilment in the same way that he portrays autumn in

the process of bringing ripeness to everything before winter comes: man has many things to do before death comes.

## VII . Conclusion

In his sonnet addressed to the sonnet form, Keats expresses his dissatisfaction with the limitation and restriction that this form brings to poetry: "If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd. " He asserts his desire to compose "sandals more interwoven and complete " by experimenting freely on the form in that sonnet. Meanwhile, he found the ode less restricting, but did not refrain from experimenting on it. It is the result of his experiments on the ode form that the spring odes of 1819 were written, and these were followed by "To Autumn, " which was composed a few months later, in September of the same year. The movement of the ode form enables the poet to suggest different ideas, arguments, and statements, and allows him to present series of questions and answers, that produce a cumulative effect and lead the poem to the final resolution. The ode form enables the poet to create a change in moods and ideas through moving from one stanza to the next, a process which helps him to develop his thoughts and feelings to progress towards the main point and thus to the conclusion. When we consider the great odes and analyze the similarities among them, what emerges as one of their most significant themes is the relation between the real and the ideal. The elements of the actual world are in conflict with those of the ideal, but they complement each other and are inseparable. In the earlier odes--"Ode to Psyche, " "Ode to a Nightingale, " and "Ode on a Grecian Urn "--the poet tries to combine the permanence of the ideal world with the liveliness of the real realm. He sees the real and the ideal as two sides of the same coin because they are inextricable; they cannot be wholly united either. In the later odes--"Ode on Melancholy" and "To Autumn"--he is not concerned with the impossible task of bringing the two together, but with the necessity to

accept the transience of life and the inevitability of change. He emphasizes, however, that the real and the ideal, the actual and the imaginary, the physical and the spiritual, body and soul, pain and pleasure, and finally life and death complement each other and coexist as two different facets of the same system. Trying to separate them from each other is meaningless and impossible.

In all of the odes, the poet presents a condition of intensity, which directly relates to the main theme. In each ode an intense emotion or a situation is presented, and the poet yearns for the permanence of such moments of delight. Through the use of oxymoron and sensory imagery the poet implies and asserts the relation between the real and the ideal, which is also reflected in Keats's ideas about beauty and its nature.

The odes were composed with great rapidity at a time when Keats saw his death as imminent. Therefore, they emphasize the coexistence of the physical and the spiritual, the real and the ideal as well as their union which is only possible in the world of art or in the artist's imagination. According to George C. Gross, one of the most essential points in "Ode to Psyche" is the union of a mortal with an immortal, which reflects the poet's attempt to yoke mortality with immortality (1990, 152). Keats claims that the spiritual and the physical coexist, and that man can gain self-awareness and self-consciousness only when his soul and body are united: the real place of Psyche as the symbol of the human soul is within the mind which is inseparable from the body. Similarly, in "Ode to a Nightingale," the poet says that he is only "half in love with death" as he knows that death causes the separation of the soul and the body which in turn results in his separation from the ideal forever. For Keats, the physical world creates and provides a way to the ideal realm.

In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," it is through the imagination that the poet visualizes the antique vase, which is the dominant symbol of beauty

and permanence; however, the task of visualizing the object is possible only when body and soul are not disunited. "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" also reflect the poet's desire to combine the real and the ideal. In the former, the poet travels to the ideal through his imagination after listening to the bird, while in the latter he visualizes "a thing of beauty" in the same way that he sees the deities in his imagination in "Ode to Psyche." The three odes involve a journey to the ideal and a return to the actual world, which give a chance to the poet to consider the limitations of each world. In "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Keats presents his desire to reach the ideal, although in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" he shows that he is aware of the limitations of that world. He knows that the figures on the vase can never change their conditions, meaning that permanence can be boring. The lovers cannot kiss each other, and the "fair youth" cannot "leave" his song; however, they will remain happy forever because change as the essence of life cannot enter their ideal world to create sorrow. The figures will be happy and young, and their happiness will last forever because they are portrayed in the moment of intensity and delight. Although people can experience happiness in the actual world, they cannot grasp joy and delight forever as change is inevitable in the real world. Keats does not want to give up the liveliness of the real world because he knows that lack of liveliness is the limitation of the ideal realm; thus, he wants to combine this liveliness with the permanence of the ideal.

While in the earlier odes, the poet tries to combine the two worlds, in "Ode on Melancholy" and "To Autumn" he gains maturity of outlook so that he accepts life with its process of change, which results in decay and death. According to Frederick Jarvis, Keats's acceptance of the inevitability of change and death is his final answer to the sorrowful condition of living (1988, 179). In "Ode on Melancholy," the poet argues that pain and pleasure, happiness and sorrow, life and death are two different--but

complementary--sides of a whole system. In this poem he suggests that life is full of dualities, conflicts, and paradoxes that are meaningful when they are not disunited. The meaning of joy, delight, and liveliness can be fully comprehended when man experiences melancholy, sadness, and death. In Robert Cummings's view, by showing the coexistence of melancholy and joy, Keats presents the impossibility of experiencing happiness without sadness and that is why "for Keats, Melancholy is *with* Beauty and Joy and Pleasure, and *in* Delight" (1987, 51). "Ode on Melancholy" presents pain as the real condition of humanity, in the similar way that "Ode to a Nightingale" suggests pain, "fever, " and "fret" to be the condition of human existence. In the latter the poet longs for permanence of happiness and delight, in the former he discovers pain as the context of pleasure and sadness as that of delight. "To Autumn" shows autumn as the season of conflicts and paradoxes, which complement each other at the same time: life and death, the beginning and the end come together. The fall season provides variety of food for man, yet it is the messenger of winter which means coming of death. The poet's response to autumn is that he accepts it with all of its paradoxes and dualities and that he tries to enjoy life and its natural process. That is why "To Autumn" does not present the tensions of "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn. " Unlike the earlier odes, in which the poet considers a goddess, a bird, and an art object, in "Ode on Melancholy" and "To Autumn" there is not a dominant symbol representing immortality and permanence; however, the odes suggest the coexistence of the real and the ideal.

All the odes involve an intense emotion, or a situation because intensity itself relates to the poet's ideas about the real and the ideal. In "Ode to Psyche, " Cupid and Psyche are portrayed at the climax of their love while in "Ode to a Nightingale" the poet talks about his intense and complex experiences, such as delight, pain, and numbness as he listens to the bird's

song. The Grecian urn portrays different scenes showing ecstasy and great desire of the male figures to catch the females while "Ode on Melancholy" shows melancholy to be an intense feeling. "To Autumn" shows nature and every living being in it at the climax of their existence. Because the moments of intensity create beauty or pleasure, the poet yearns for their permanence while he is aware of the impossibility of what he wants since beauty and pleasure coexist with their counterparts. In each ode the poet uses oxymorons to emphasize the dualities of life and its elements. "Aching pleasure" in "Ode on Melancholy" implies that pain and pleasure are functions of each other in the same way that "pleasant pain" in "Ode to Psyche" suggests the coexistence of the feelings. In "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats talks about the "pain" in his heart, resulting from being "too happy" because of the bird's happiness and joy.

The relation between the real and the ideal, and the coexistence of the elements of the two worlds are also presented through images. In "Ode to Psyche" and "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats makes his vision to be seen as a real condition by means of vivid imagery. Softness, gentleness, and freshness are the qualities which are presented through images in "Ode to Psyche" as the poet allows the reader to see a calm picture of nature, to touch the flowers that are not only fresh but also attractive because of their lively colors, and to hear the silence of the forest. In "Ode to a Nightingale," the image of the "Queen-Moon" and her "starry Fays" makes it possible to see the light of the imaginary or the ideal world, which is contrasted to the darkness of the real one. According to Heather Coombs, by presenting images from nature, Keats makes the reader realize that his emotional experiences enter into a sort of harmony with the natural world (1978, 124). In other words, the poet successfully shows the relation between the emotional states of mind and the actual conditions, an example of which can be seen in "Ode to a Nightingale." It is within the

natural setting that the poet feels happiness, numbness, and sadness at the same time as a result of being affected by the bird, which itself belongs to nature. In "To Autumn" Keats intensifies the idea of "fruitfulness" through presenting images of different living beings at the climax of their natural maturity, a state of being which implies the coexistence of life and death. According to Ronald A. Sharp, Keats's sensibility plays a very essential role in "To Autumn, " since he gives himself to the season so intensely that he finally discovers the beauty of autumn (1989, 69). This sensibility leads the poet to accept life as it is and to enjoy it in the way that he did not in the earlier odes in which he tries to reach the ideal.

Like the coexistence of life and death, that of beauty and decay is another common theme of the great odes. In the earlier odes, such as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " the short-lived nature of beauty causes the poet to try to find a way to immortalize beauty; but he concludes that beauty can only be immortalized by means of art, though the artist is mortal. The Grecian urn as an object of art has passed from one generation to another and the nightingale's song has entered to history, religion, and to the world of imagination. Although in the later odes the poet implies the transience of beauty and inevitability of change, he does not attempt to immortalize beauty, but considers the coexistence of beauty and decay because they are two halves of a whole. "The field will indeed be mowed down; death will eventually come, even to that next swath 'and all its twined flowers, ' which the 'hook' has spared only temporarily. But by embracing--not just accepting but actually embracing--mortality, Keats discovers again the paradox that death is the mother of beauty" (In Evert and Rhodes 1991, 122).

The relation between the real and the ideal as one of the most significant themes of Keats's odes allows the reader to gain a complete



view of life and its dualities and to reach a maturity not only in his life view but also in his judgment. Keats shows that truths of life can be comprehended through art and man can reach spiritual truths from the materials of the real life. He proves that the real and the ideal cannot be separated. Keats's art does not only teach the truths of life, but also creates delight because it presents intense emotions and beautiful images that are successfully related to the main theme. Maybe these are some of the reasons why Douglas Bush claims that Keats has not only remained relatively "undamaged, " but also "elevated" through the anti-romantic movements of the last decades (In Abrams 1960, 326). Keats's oxymoronic view of life and his ability to deal with conflicts and paradoxes give maturity, beauty, and depth to his poetry. It is clear from his poetry that Keats reached his goal to be a great poet, though he did not actually realize it within his short lifetime. He composed the epitaph for himself which is written on his grave:

This Grave  
Contains all that was mortal  
of a  
YOUNG ENGLISH POET  
who  
on his Death Bed,  
in the Bitterness of his Heart  
at the Malicious Power of his Enemies,  
Desired  
these Words to be engraven on his Tomb Stone  
"Here lies One  
Whose name was writ in Water"

History has proven Keats to be wrong, because today he is generally accepted to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the romantic poets.

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