John KEATS – Ode on a Grecian Urn

THOU still unravish'd[1] bride of quietness,
Thou[2] foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan[3] historian, who canst[4] thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed[5] legend haunts about thy[6] shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth[7]?
What mad pursuit[8]? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye[9] soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe[10] to the spirit ditties of no tone[11]:
Fair[12] youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve[13];
She cannot fade[14], though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearièd[15],
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[16], and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd[17],
A burning forehead, and a parching[18] tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou[19] that heifer[20] lowing at the skies[21],
And all her silken[22] flanks with garlands drest?

What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn[23]?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore[24]
Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er[25] return.

O Attic[26] shape! fair attitude! with brede[27]
Of marble men and maidens overwrought[28],
With forest branches and the trodden[29] weed;
Thou, silent form! dost tease us[30] out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral[31]!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe[32]
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st[33],
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

---

[1] unravish'd = unravished, not raped, not deflowered
[2] thou = *(arch. and poet)* you *(singular)*
[3] sylvan = related to woods and forests
[4] canst = *(arch. 2nd pers sg.)* can
[5] leaf-fring'd = fringed or outlined with leaves (an allusion to the type of decoration delineating the edges of ancient Greek frescoes or painted compositions of amphorae).
[6] thy = your
[7] what maidens loth = (loath) = what are they unwilling to? What are they reluctant to do?
[8] pursuit (n.) = chase; *urmărire*
[9] ye = *(arch.)* you (*in the plural)*
[10] pipe = *(here used as a verb)* to play a pipe
[11] of no tone = with no music; silent; mute
[12] fair = *the old meaning of* fair *is not that of* blond, *but of* beautiful *or, ocassionally* honest.
[13] grieve = to complain, to whine about
[14] fade = disappear
[15] …-èd = *the accent marks a syllable that, though not normally uttered, becomes sonorous for metric purposes in the poem.*
[16] panting = breathing heavily (out of exhaustion or excitement); *a gâfâi*
[17] cloy'd = cloyed = overwhelmed, *copleşit*
[18] parching = burning; *uscat, veştejit*
[19] lead's thou = you lead = *mâi (un animal)*
[20] heifer = a young cow (usually under 2 years old)
[21] low (vb.) = *(dialect)* to burn; (here) to sacrifice by means of imolation (burning)
[22] silken = smooth like silk
[23] morn = (*arch., poet.)* = morning
[24] for evermore = for ever; always: *de-a pururea*
[25] e'er = ever
[26] Attic = *(no to be mistaken with "attic" = pod al casei)* having the characteristics of Athens or its ancient civilization; simple, pure and refined.
[27] brede = embroidery; *dantelărie*
[28] overwrought = *wrought* is an old past form of *work*, meaning *făurit.* (Here) = (supra)împodobit.
[29] trodden = *pasto of* trod = *călcat în picioare, strivit.*
[30] dost tease us = [you] do tease us = *ne tachinezi; ne stârneşti; ne inciți*
[31] Pastoral = literary species in verse, portraying the life of shepherds or country people especially in an idealized and conventionalized manner
[32] woe = suffering, pain; *nenorocire*
[33] thou say'st = *(arch.)* you say