## 1819

## TO A SKYLARK

**Percy Bysshe Shelley** 

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822) - English poet, he was a humanist and a Platonist who rejected all conventions which he thought stifled human freedom.

After the suicide of his estranged first wife, he eloped with Mary Wollstonecraft (Shelley) who later wrote the classic, "Frankenstein." To a Skylark (1819) - In

1819 Shelley moved to Pisa where he composed many of his short verses, including "To a Skylark." Opening lines: Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! / Bird thou never wert, ...

## **TO A SKYLARK**

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even

Melts around thy flight; Like a star of Heaven, In the broad daylight Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows Of that silver sphere, Whose intense lamp narrows In the white dawn clear Until we hardly see- we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not; What is most like thee? From rainbow clouds there flow not Drops so bright to see As from thy presence showers a rain of melody. Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aereal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

Like a rose embowered In its own green leaves, By warm winds deflowered, Till the scent it gives

Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers On the twinkling grass, Rain-awakened flowers, All that ever was Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird, What sweet thoughts are thine: I have never heard Praise of love or wine That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine. Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance Languor cannot be: Shadow of annoyance Never came near thee: Thou lovest- but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after, And pine for what is not: Our sincerest laughter With some pain is fraught;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn Hate, and pride, and fear; If we were things born Not to shed a tear, I know not how thy joy we ever should come near. Better than all measures Of delightful sound, Better than all treasures That in books are found,

Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then- as I am listening now.

## **THE END**