

In the fourth stanza the thought turns, the shift of the thought is caught in the shift of the image. They longed for escape into the ideal world, which is being realized now. The poet longs to transcend the world of human reality into the world of the Nightingale and 'charioted by Bacchus and his pards' but on 'the viewless wings of Poesy'. Keats conjures up his vision of the ideal world of Beauty, to which belongs the Nightingale. The night is tender. The word 'tender' conveys a sense of calm serenity. The queen moon is clustered around by 'starry fays'. The moon and stars have been personified here. The last three lines of the stanza suggest that after his brief union with the bird, the poet has retreated into a slaver

thicket. The darkness is, however, very much alive. Here the poet achieves a different kind of release. He seeks to escape from hidden existence not through complete identification with the bird but through recognition and realization of the fact of process.

In the fifth stanza, the sensuous imagination of the poet is at work and having entered the 'dim forest', the poet 'cannot see'. Though this stanza is full of sensuous details, most of the images of sight are fancied by the poet. He does not actually see the queen moon or the stars. He can only guess what flowers are at his feet. He has found his way into an 'embalmed darkness'. The word 'embalmed' means sweet with balm but it also suggests death. Odour merges with touch in 'what soft incense hangs upon the boughs'. The grass, the thicket and the fruit-

tree will have tactual and plastic qualities. The 'musk-rose, full of Jewy wine' has a such sensation of taste. The murmurous haunt of flies on 'summer eves' is haunting in its music of the scene.

The poet gives himself upto the ecstasy of her song. He will willingly sacrifice his life to this great consummate moment. But the poet suddenly realizes that death will mean a denial of immediate sensory experience. The living body turns into a clod of earth. This, though, changes the direction of the poet's response and the ecstatic song of the bird becomes high requiem.

The poet's conviction of identification with bird; the illusion of his hold upon its values as poetic, is slowly dissipated. The voice he hears was heard by emperor and clown. It has heralded the opening of endless vistas into

'faery lands' but it has also sung to the Biblical Ruth at a specific moment in time. The meditative trance of the poet cannot last long with the world 'forlorn'. The reverie is broken. The song of the nightingale becomes a 'plaintive anthem'. The music which almost succeeded in making him "fade far away" now itself fades and in a moment is 'buried deep / in the next valley-glades'. The poem concludes with a query:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music: - do I wake or sleep?

The questions come from one who is prostrated by the impact of a powerful experience and is too much dazed to judge or define it in very positive terms. The conclusion is typically Keatsian in trying 'not to dispute or assert, but whisper result.'