

**Discuss the imagery in To a Skylark.**

In his great lyric To a Skylark, Shelley uses dazzling imagery in order to bring out two main issues. These issues are: the entity of the bird as the personification of the abstract idea of happiness, and the unseen existence of the bird in the sky. Another central idea of the poem is the superiority of the bird's song to any human song. In the poem, Shelley makes a fervent or passionate appeal to the bird to lend some of its mystical and spiritual richness to him. He will distribute it then among mankind for its spiritual renaissance or re-awakening. Now, Shelley's skylark starts its career from the familiar soil of the earth: but 'like a cloud of fire' it aspires solely upwards. But very soon, pursuing its own happiness, it gets lost in the infinity of blue heaven. It is in a position where it cannot be seen from below: but its song enchants millions on the earth. We, on the earth cannot see the bird: but can perceive its existence from its song. The fact that the bird is in a higher position, almost near heaven, and we, human beings, are on the earth's surface; itself indicates its superiority over us. In this context, Shelley uses four images. These are: a poet hidden by the brilliance of his ideas; an aristocratic maiden, remaining captive and unseen in a palace tower, but pouring out her heart through melodious song; a glow-worm emitting its light while itself remaining hidden in a dewy valley; and a rose hidden by its leaves, but spreading its perfume.

This issue of invisible song is conveyed by the images of the moon becoming obscured by sunrise, and the "stars of heaven" becoming obscured in broad daylight. Shelley's Hellenism can be seen in the idea of the moon as goddess Diana shooting her 'keen' arrows of light and the "chorus hymeneal".

Then there are beautiful images of raindrops falling from rainbow-coloured clouds; sounds of spring showers on twinkling grass; and flowers awakened by the rain. All these beautiful objects of nature are surpassed in brilliance and freshness by the skylark's song. There are conceptual images of the skylark's source of happiness; either love, or ignorance of suffering, or knowledge of the secret of death. Lastly, Shelley prays to the skylark to inspire him: so that he can play a prophetic role.

All the images used are vivid. They suggest the symbolic character of the bird. This is so, as the poet himself being unable to apprehend what the bird is really like: takes recourse to some approximate earthly, natural imagery. There is a long succession of dazzling imagery which enchant the reader by the ineffable or indescribable charm of the bird. However, the profusion of images makes the poem a bit too ornamental.