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## Concept Of Autumn In Poetry

Poems are a way to create music and bring harmony to this world. The very famous poet in Greek mythology, Orpheus, walked the earth and visited the underground whilst playing his lyre and singing. He thus transmitted his emotions and sang about the things he had before him which were also his source of inspiration. Throughout centuries many poets have kept doing so, and it the case with the Briton poet Shelley, whose poems refer to nature and the circle of the seasons. In Shelley's poem Ode to the West Wind ideas appear in every canto, creating circle, but expressed differently each time. So renewal is indeed about the new, even though some things can appear again, under a different aspect. Each of the seven cantos of Ode to the West Wind contains five stanzas, each of them composed of four three-line stanzas and a two-line couple, and they all follow follows this rhythm scheme: ABA BCB CDC DED EE. How does this circle shape Shelley's poem and lead the reader to his questioning of life? The wind influences the natural environment over which it evolves with its continuous blowing and its never-ending movements in the air, on the surface of the earth and under water. This means that wind also affects every being that belongs to this environment where the wind evolves, and the persona's own transformation by the wind also is a metaphor of the evolution of the persona's art.

The persona addresses his speech directly to the Wind, speaking to him as he would speak to a person. This apostrophe, "O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being" (l 1) shows the great influence of the Wind on the world. Humans have sharpened the world's face forever, but here, by addressing his words to the wind, the persona makes us understand that the wind has in fact a greater power than us, and he talks about it line 45, identifying himself as an element that would be submitted to the wind, "A wave to pant thy power". This wind is called "wild West Wind", the alliteration in /w/ letting us hear its sound, showing its uncontrollable character that cannot be tamed, which can also be hear in the assonance in /oo/ line 39: "The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear". Besides, Shelley is a European poet, which means that what he can find in the West is America, and the newly born United States, which appeared at the time as a land of freedom and a home to new ideas.

The blowing of the wind wakens the elements, provokes life, movements on the earth. The winds can "blow" (l 9) and is the "breath of Autumn", so he creates life on earth, following the rhythm of the seasons. The wind is able to visit the whole earth and carry things over different continents, or different atmospheres. It organizes the universe, sometimes assembling things and something separating them: "Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion/ Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,/ Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean" (l 15-17). The wind moves everywhere, which allows the speaker to talk about various places, such as "The blue Mediterranean" (l 30), which contrasts with the "Atlantic's level powers" (l 37). This why all elements "[...] know/ Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,/ And tremble and despoil themselves" (l 40-42).

The wind is also an element of renewal. This line "Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead/ Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing" (l 2-3), shows us the wind as being the carrier of death, on which the persona insists by placing the word "dead" at the end of the verse, inversing it with the word "leaves". Leaves refer to nature; but nature is dead as Autumn is here and the wind has come to blow what is left on the surface of the Earth. However

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two stanzas later, the persona speaks of "The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,/ Each like a corpse within its grave, until/ Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow", and the mention of seeds reminds us of life. They are the very image of renewal, as they will give birth to other flowers and plants despite the cold winter. Spring will come, says the persona, so life is stronger than death, and they both belong to the same circle: one cannot exist without the other. In Greek mythology this idea is represented by the phoenix who can be born again from his ashes. Ashes, as well as sparks, are mentioned line 67: "Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth/ Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!", and this circle will be extended to mankind thanks to the speaker's poem, in which he has been able to express the wind's effect over the world.

The circle of nature and life is not the only one going through a process of change: in this poem we can also see the persona's own evolution. The persona identifies himself as an element of nature, and wishes to change his human condition to turn himself into a leaf or a cloud: "If I were a dead leaf thou mightiest bear/ If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee" (l 43-44). Humans are perceived as being too heavy to be borne, and only death or airy elements can be carried away. The persona understands he has to become part of nature to experiment this union with the world, "Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" (l 53) he says to the wind. But what does really keep humans to the ground? Time passing by affects them, as it is shown line 54 "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" with life leaving the persona. It is the effect of time, the weight of the ground, which is opposite to the infinite lightness of the wind, hence the speaker talking about "A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd" (l 55).

The poem is an illustration of the world the persona sees before him, "Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,/ Pestilence-stricken multitudes" (l 4-5), insisting on the decaying aspect of these leaves. But as the circle happens, colour changes, there are soon "All overgrown with azure moss and flowers/ So sweet, the sense faints picturing them!" (l 36). Shelley uses the *terza rima* (a series of triplets interlacing rhymes) form for his poem, a poetic form that comes from Italy, but that he modified here, in order to finish each canto with a climatic couplet. This other way of writing insists on the effect of the wind on the leaves, the clouds and the water, since, with their shortness and location at the end of each canto, those couplets mark their print better in our minds. In those couplets the persona speaks of the wind as a Destroyer" and a "preserver", he also talks about rain and fire, two elements that are both able to destroy or preserve. This way of structuring the poem is similar to the vanishing point in painting, and this poem is similar to picturesque paintings with the image of the "old palaces and towers" that are "in sleep" (l 33).

Throughout the poem the speaker is asking to be listened and he is trying to find his voice amongst the multitude of humans being and the noise of the wind blowing, hence his asking at the end of the first three cantos "oh hear". As the poem progresses, the tumult becomes a song, and the narrator is eventually able to ask what he has been meaning to ask from the beginning: "O Wind,/ If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (l 69-70). So even when death comes - represented here by the coming of winter - life can never be far. In the fifth canto, the persona transforms the wind into a metaphor for his own art, saying that the wind can "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe/ Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth" (l 63-64), that is, to quicken the coming of the spring. Here the spring season is a metaphor for a "spring" of human consciousness, imagination and liberty: all the things Shelley hoped his art could bring to the human mind. The antithesis "The tumult of thy mighty harmonies" (l 59) shows the complexity of the poem, and how hard it can be for the poet to find his place in this changing

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world, where he might be afraid of what his art will represent: "Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:/ What if my leaves are falling like its own!" (l 57-58).

Shelley repeats his ideas in every canto, but showing them each time under a different point of view, and with different examples. Talking about autumn leads him to talking about death, and in the end it leads him to wondering about the impact of his work and his place in the world. This continuity can be found in other poems of the same era, such as in Keats' poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, where the speaker talks about the different pictures on the urn one by one, and therefore the urn becomes an historian, witnessing pictures frozen in time talking about songs that are "forever new", unlike love that is "mortal". This scene, similar to the cantos in Shelley's poem lead Keats as well towards his own questioning, and what he has been meaning to tell the world: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty".