

<p>College of Education</p> <p>Department of English</p> <p>Third Stage (Morning)</p> <p>Lecture 12</p>		<p>Instructor: Dr.Mugdad</p> <p>Subject: Poetry</p>
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Themes of P.B. Shelley's Poetry

1.The Heroic, Visionary Role of the Poet

In Shelley's poetry, the figure of the poet (and, to some extent, the figure of Shelley himself) is not simply a talented entertainer or even a perceptive moralist but a grand, tragic, prophetic hero. The poet has a deep, mystic appreciation for nature, as in the poem "To Wordsworth" (1816), and this intense connection with the natural world gives him access to profound cosmic truths, as in "Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude" (1816). He has the power—and the duty—to translate these truths, through the use of his imagination, into poetry, but only a kind of poetry that the public can understand. Thus, his poetry becomes a kind of prophecy, and through his words, a poet has the ability to change the world for the better and to bring about political, social, and spiritual change. Shelley's poet is a near-divine savior, comparable to Prometheus, who stole divine fire and gave it to humans in Greek mythology, and to Christ. Like Prometheus and Christ, figures of the poets in Shelley's work are often doomed to suffer: because their visionary power isolates them

from other men, because they are misunderstood by critics, because they are persecuted by a tyrannical government, or because they are suffocated by conventional religion and middle-class values. In the end, however, the poet triumphs because his art is immortal, outlasting the tyranny of government, religion, and society and living on to inspire new generations.

2.The Power of Nature

Like many of the romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, Shelley demonstrates a great reverence for the beauty of nature, and he feels closely connected to nature's power. In his early poetry, Shelley shares the romantic interest in pantheism—the belief that God, or a divine, unifying spirit, runs through everything in the universe. He refers to this unifying natural force in many poems, describing it as the “spirit of beauty” in “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” and identifying it with Mont Blanc and the Arve River in “Mont Blanc.” This force is the cause of all human joy, faith, goodness, and pleasure, and it is also the source of poetic inspiration and divine truth. Shelley asserts several times that this force can influence people to change the world for the better. However, Shelley simultaneously recognizes that nature's power is not wholly positive. Nature destroys as often as it inspires or creates, and it destroys cruelly and indiscriminately. For this reason, Shelley's delight in nature is mitigated by an awareness of its dark side.

3.The Power of the Human Mind

Shelley uses nature as his primary source of poetic inspiration. In such poems as “The Mask of Anarchy Written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester” (1819) and “Ode to the West Wind,” Shelley suggests that the natural world holds a sublime power over his imagination. This power seems to come from a stranger, more mystical place than simply his appreciation for nature’s beauty or grandeur. At the same time, although nature has creative power over Shelley because it provides inspiration, he feels that his imagination has creative power over nature. It is the imagination—or our ability to form sensory perceptions—that allows us to describe nature in different, original ways, which help to shape how nature appears and, therefore, how it exists. Thus, the power of the human mind becomes equal to the power of nature, and the experience of beauty in the natural world becomes a kind of collaboration between the perceiver and the perceived. Because Shelley cannot be sure that the sublime powers he senses in nature are only the result of his gifted imagination, he finds it difficult to attribute nature’s power to God: the human role in shaping nature damages Shelley’s ability to believe that nature’s beauty comes solely from a divine source.

Literary Devices

1.Symbols :

Mont Blanc

For Shelley, Mont Blanc—the highest peak in the Alps—represents the eternal power of nature. Mont Blanc has existed forever, and it will last forever, an idea he explores in “Mont Blanc.” The mountain fills the poet with inspiration, but its coldness and inaccessibility are terrifying. Ultimately, though, Shelley wonders if the mountain’s power might be meaningless, an invention of the more powerful human imagination.

The West Wind

Shelley uses the West Wind to symbolize the power of nature and of the imagination inspired by nature. Unlike Mont Blanc, however, the West Wind is active and dynamic in poems, such as “Ode to the West Wind.” While Mont Blanc is immobile, the West Wind is an agent for change. Even as it destroys, the wind encourages new life on earth and social progress among humanity.

The Statue of Ozymandias

In Shelley’s work, the statue of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, or Ozymandias, symbolizes political tyranny. In “Ozymandias,” (1817) the statue is broken into pieces and stranded

in an empty desert, which suggests that tyranny is temporary and also that no political leader, particularly an unjust one, can hope to have lasting power or real influence. The broken monument also represents the decay of civilization and culture: the statue is, after all, a human construction, a piece of art made by a creator, and now it—and its creator—have been destroyed, as all living things are eventually destroyed.

Ode to the West Wind

by [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#)

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

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

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

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,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing [night](#)
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid [atmosphere](#)
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

- **Popularity of “[Ode to the West Wind](#)”:** [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#), a [famous](#) romantic poet, wrote ‘Ode to the West Wind’. It was first published in 1820. The [poem](#) illustrates the most powerful impact of a specific wind. Also, it exhibits the poet’s desire to utilize the mighty West Wind as a medium to make people realize the importance of this natural blessing.
- **“Ode to the West Wind” As a Representative of Power:** The poem manifests two important points; the power of the west wind and the power of poetry. He calls the wind preserver, destructor, wild, musician and an agent of change and appeals to the west wind to make him as mighty as itself so that he can spread his ripe ideas and words across the globe. He also asks the wind to transform him into a musical instrument so that he can [play](#) the tune of his thoughts and ideas to make the world aware of his presence. He adds, the powerful west wind also brings winter with it that symbolizes death. But, he is hopeful about the spring that will bring new life after winter.

- **Major themes in “Ode to the West Wind”:** Power, human limitations and the natural world are the major themes of this poem. The poet adores the power and grandeur of the west wind, and also wishes that revolutionary ideas could reach every corner of the universe.

Analysis of Literary Devices in “Ode to the West Wind”

The poet has used various literary devices to enhance the intended impacts of her poem. Some of the major literary devices have been analyzed below.

1. **Alliteration:** Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as the sound of /w/ in “O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being” and /g/ sound in “Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear”.
2. **Simile:** It is a figure of speech used to compare an object or a person with something else. For example, “Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing”; “Each like a corpse within its grave”; “Loose clouds like earth’s decaying leaves are shed”.
3. **Symbolism:** Symbolism is using symbols to signify ideas and qualities, giving them symbolic meanings different from literal meanings. “West wind” symbolizes the mighty power of nature, “dead leaves” are symbols of death and destruction, and “dying year” symbolizes the end of the season.
4. **Imagery:** Imagery is used to make readers perceive things with their five senses. For example, “dark wintery bed”, “yellow, and black and pale and hectic red” and “Angles of rain and lightning” are some examples of visual imagery. The images such as, “the trumpet of a prophecy”, “Black rain and fire and hail will burst” and “Her clarion” are the examples of auditory imagery. Similarly, “Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere” and “Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth Ashes and sparks” are the examples of kinetic imagery.

5. **Personification:** Personification is to give human qualities to inanimate objects. For example, “Destroyer and Preserver”, “Who chariotest”, “Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams”, “The blue Mediterranean, where he lay” and “thou breath of Autumn’s being” as if the wind is human that can dream, breathe and rest like a human being.
6. **Anastrophe:** It refers to the reversal of the syntactically correct order of subjects, verbs, and objects in a sentence. Shelley has used anastrophe in the second line, “leaves dead” instead of dead leaves.
7. **Enjambment:** It is defined as a thought or clause that does not come to an end at a line break; rather, it moves over to the next line such as;

“Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know.”

The literary analysis shows that appropriate use of literary elements has made the poem, not just thought-provoking but also explains the power of human imagination and nature.