



Ode to the West Wind

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Themes

1. Man, Nature and Society
2. Transformation: life, death and resurrection
3. Mortality of the poet; and the immortality of poetry
4. Narcissism: melancholy and self-pity

Various Aspects of the Poem

1. Mood: A sense of detachment

2. Setting:

1. Powerlessness of the poet
2. Power of poetry

3. The philosophy of regeneration:

- of ideas that should effect change upon humanity

4. Language:

- Abstract ideas and intense emotion

- i. **An Ode:** an address to a particular subject.
- ii. Written in **Florence, Italy (1819)**
- iii. It is divided into **five cantos**
- iv. Written in **Terza rima:** an interlocking three-line rhyme scheme.
- v. **The Autumn**



The Five Cantos

1. **1st Canto:** how west wind affects the earth
2. **2nd Canto:** how west wind affects the waters
3. **3rd Canto:** how west wind affects the cosmos
4. **4th Canto:** how west wind will liberate the poet
5. **5th Canto:** how poetry is regenerated through the death of the poet

1st Canto: how west wind affects the earth(dried leaves)

- ❖ The speaker **addresses** the West Wind three times.
- ❖ The **Similes**:
 - Like a magician driving the ghosts
 - Like a shephard driving the sheep
- ❖ The **Symbols**:
 - **Dead leaves** symbolizes Shelly's poems
 - **Winged seeds** symbolizes radical ideas of Shelly's poems
- ❖ An **Allusion** to Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu

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 **wingèd 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, O hear!

2nd Canto: how west wind affects the cosmos (a storm is brewing)

❖ The speaker **addresses** the West Wind two times.

❖ The **Similes**:

➤ Clouds spread over sky Like dead leaves float in streams

➤ Thunder clouds are compared to the hair of Maenad (a woman from Greek mythology)

❖ The **Metaphors**:

➤ The formation of clouds compared to branches of a tree

➤ The sky and the ocean are called as angels

❖ dirge= a funeral song

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 airy 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: O hear!

3rd Canto: how west wind affects the waters(the Mediterranean sea, Bay of Naples and Atlantic Ocean)

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue **Mediterranean, where he** lay,
Lulled by the coil of his chrystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with **azure** moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them!

Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far
below

The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which
wear

The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O
hear!

❖ The speaker **addresses** the West Wind three times.

❖ The **Personification:**

❖ Mediterranean..

❖ (2-3) Calm during Summer

❖ pumice=volcanic rocks

❖ (5-8) Reflection

❖ (8-10) wind disturbing the sea

❖ Sea-blooms=marine plants; sapless=dull

4th Canto: how west wind will liberate the poet

- ❖ The speaker **addresses**
- ❖ The **Simile**
- ❖ (1-6) west wind to control him:
surrendering to Nature
- ❖ Art cannot thrive in slavery but in liberty
- ❖ This canto becomes very personal
- ❖ A demand from Nature
- ❖ Narcissism: the sympathetic 'I'

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, **O Uncontrollable!** If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have
striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and
bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and
proud.

5th Canto: how poetry is regenerated through the death of the poet

- The **Metaphor**

- The **Similes:**

- ❖ Like the forest

- ❖ Like its trees

- The **Symbols:**

- Lyre (Aeolian harp)= a passive instrument of Nature

- (5-6)poet wants to be like the West Wind

- Impetuous=impulsive;move with force

- Unextinguished hearth=poet himself

- Poet dies; poem will live

Make me thy **lyre**, even **as the forest is:**
What if my leaves are falling **like its own!**
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. **Be thou**, Spirit
fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my **dead thoughts** over the universe,
Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an **unextinguished hearth**
Ashes and sparks, my words among
mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! **O Wind**,
If **Winter** comes, can **Spring** be far behind?

