

Critical appreciation of the poem 'ode to the west wind' essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



“ Thunder is good; thunder is impressive. But it is lightening that does the work.” The poem “Ode to the West Wind” was written in the autumn of 1819, in the beautiful Cascine Gardens outside Florence and was published with “ Prometheus Unbound” in 1820. The poet is himself in a mood of despondency and misery and says that he falls upon the thorns of life and is bleeding. He is seeking reawakening also through the poem and wants the wind to carry his dead thoughts and ideas like it has taken the leaves and wants fresh ideas to take birth. This is possible only if he first gets rid of stale ideas and thoughts and learns to replace them with new ones. In that sense even the poet is feeling a sort of intellectual deaths and is desirous of being given a new lease of life.

“ This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once wild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.” Nothing can surpass Shelley’s poetic description of himself in ‘ Adonais’, as a ‘ frail form’, ‘ a phantom among men’, ‘ companionless’ as ‘ the last cloud of an expiring storm’- “ The weight of the superincumbent hour,

It is a dying lamp, a falling shower;

A breaking billow;”

The life of Shelley lays worlds apart from that of Byron. His treatment of Harriet apart, his private life was not vicious, but on the contrary in many

respects exemplary. As far as the ideas, which he sang, were capable of application to life, he applied them in his own conduct. He preached the equality of man and he proved that he was willing to practice it. He was generous and benevolent to a fault. "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."

Shelley holds a unique place in English literature by virtue of his power of making myths out of the objects and forces of Nature. Clutton-Brock has discussed in detail Shelley's myth-making power as revealed in the Ode to the West Wind: "It has been said that Shelley was a myth-maker. His myths were not to him mere caprices of fancy. They expressed by the only means which human language provides for the expression of such things, that sense which he possessed, of a more intense reality in nature than is felt by other men. To most of us, the forces of nature have little meanings. But for Shelley, these forces had as much reality as human beings. Have for most of us, and he found the same kind of intense significance in their manifestations of beauty that we find in the beauty of human beings or of great works of art.

The nature of this significance, he could not explain; but he could express it with enormous power in his art, and with a precision of statement which seems miraculous where the nature of the subject matter is considered... to Shelley, the West Wind was still a wind, and the cloud a cloud, however intense a reality they might have for him. ...we are not wrought upon to feel anything human in the wind's power; but if we are susceptible to Shelley's magic, we are filled with a new sense of the life and significance and reality

of nature." Shelley started writing very early, but his first major work came in 1811. This was Queen Mab, a long poem. It is a revolutionary poem, but there is much confusion in the development of the story. The next great poem 'Alastor' came in 1815. In the same year he produced Mount Blanc and Hymn to Intellectual Beauty. These poems expressed the poet's idealism. In the latter of the two poems, the poet expresses his feeling of the presence of a spirit in nature. In 1818-19, came the great drama, Prometheus Unbound.

This is a major poem. As a drama it is not much of a success, but both in theme and in its individual songs it achieves greatness. In 1819, came another great play, The Cenci. This play portrays absolute evil as Prometheus Unbound portrays absolute goodness. This was followed by 'The Witch of Atlas' and 'Epipsychidion'. In the same year published 'Adonais', a lament on the death of the poet Keats. In the last year of his life (1822) Shelley wrote Hellas. Shelley left an unfinished poem, Triumph of Life. In addition to these long poems, Shelley wrote a large number of lyrics. The most well-known of these are 'Ode to the West Wind', 'To a Skylark' and 'The Cloud'. It is in these lyrics that we often find Shelley at his best. 'Ode to the West Wind' is a great achievement—a poem in which great thought is combined with great art. Most of his lyrics are love poems. Many of them express the poet's deep joy in life as well as his deep sorrow.

Shelley sets up a humanity glorified through love; he worships in the sanctuary left vacant by "the great absence of God" (His youthful atheism lacked warmth and in the end he turned to a type of pantheism). Love, as exemplified in his personal life, is a passionate kind of sensuality which

becomes his simple moral code with no duty, blame, or obligation attached. The reign of love when no authority was necessary was his millennium. Most of Shelley's poems are sad in tone and as such he is regarded as "the singer of endless sorrows", but this is not true of all his poems. Whenever he writes of the future of mankind, he turns ecstatically optimistic. "A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share.

The impulse of thy strength, only less free Than thou, O uncontrollable!" Shelley believed in a soul of the Universe, a Spirit in which all things live and move and have their being. His most passionate desire was for the mystical fusion of his own personality with his spirit. Spontaneity and fluidity are the proof of his wealth of imagination. There is no effect of laborious artistry about Shelley's style at any time. According to Bradley, "The language is poetical through and through, not, as sometimes with Wordsworth, only half-poetical, and yet it seems to drop from Shelley's lips. It is not wrought and kneaded; it flows." In 'Ode to West Wind', the poet begins his invocation in a buoyant mood. He looks upon the Wind as the destroyer of the present order and usherer of a new one. In the course of the poem, Shelley's pessimism reaches its peak. He suddenly remembers his own plight: "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"

The subsequent thought of the future at once turns his melancholy into ecstatic rapture and he ends the poem with one of the most optimistic and memorable prophecies about the future of mankind. The ecstasy arises out of his ardent belief in the imminent regeneration of mankind and the end of all evils. He hopes that all forms of tyranny and oppression will be replaced,

in the millennium to come, by all-round happiness. The joyous rapture is born of an intense feeling of optimism: " 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;" Most of Shelley's poetry is

symbolic. Shelley makes use of symbolism by means of his normal use of

images including the personified forces of life and nature. He looks upon the

West Wind as a personified force of nature and finds in it various symbolic

meanings to suit the purpose of the poem. The West Wind drives the last

signs of life from the trees and also scatters the seeds which will come to life

in spring. In this way the Wind appears to the poet as a destroyer of the old

order and a preserver of the new, i. e., a symbol of change. The Wind also

symbolizes Shelley's own personality. When he was a boy he was one like

the Wind: " tameless, and swift, and proud." He still possesses these

qualities but they lie suppressed under " a heavy weight of hours." " Ideals

are like stars.

We never reach them but, like mariners on the sea, we chart our course by

them." Shelley's sky-lyrics-"Ode to the West Wind", "The Cloud" and "To A

Skylark"-have all been interpreted as having symbolic significance. The West

Wind drives away the old, pale; hectic-red leaves and scatters fresh seeds

over the ground. Shelley thus looks upon the Wind as a destroyer of the old

order and the usherer of a new one i. e., as a symbol of the forces that will

end all evil and bring about the golden millennium in which there will be

nothing but peace and happiness for mankind. In the poem The Cloud, the

brief life of a Cloud has also been constructed by such critics as a symbol of the immortality of the soul. However, there is no doubt that his concept of the Skylark is entirely symbolic. Shelley's Skylark, is not just a bird but an embodiment of this ideal, the poet can hear its song but the bird ever remains invisible. The skylark, by its very nature, also symbolizes Shelley's own poetic spirit.

" Poetry is like a perfume which on evaporation leaves in our soul essence of beauty." Among the Romantic poets, Shelley is marveled for his inimitable abstract ideas, but he is less of an artist . He was aiming not at the poetry of art, but at the poetry of rapture. Keats advised him to be " more an artist" and to " load every rift with ore", but Shelley was aiming at a different effect from that of Keats's richly decorated and highly finished poetry. The poem" Ode to the West Wind" is universally accepted as one of the best poems in English Literature. The poem is remarkable for its theme, range of thought, spontaneity, poetic beauty, lyrical quality, and quick movement similar to that of the wind itself. This poem along with the " The Cloud" and " The Skylark", mark an abiding monument to Shelley's passion for the sky.

Shelley himself writes: " I take great delight in watching the change in the atmosphere." The west wind wakes the Mediterranean up from its summer dreams and even manages to shake up the otherwise quite calm Atlantic Ocean.

For its path the ocean starts to create cracks and the might of the west wind is so great that even the moss and flowers under the sea begin to tremble with fear. Thus, the west wind acquires the quality of being fearful and

creating terror. The clouds are carried by the wind to a tomb and are locked there. During this season, the strong wind does not let the clouds gather easily since it blows them away. Shelley imagines that the wind gathers the clouds in a sepulcher till they have enough strength to burst forth and bring rain. Again the idea of destroyer and preserver is implicit. The clouds are destroyed and without rain the earth becomes barren but then clouds burst bringing rain which brings earth back to life. There is greenery everywhere and earth is rejuvenated. " The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra."

Shelley calls the west wind the ' dirge of the dying year' and in these words is hidden the idea of rebirth. The west wind once again brings winter and December but the end of the year implies the birth of a new one since December is followed by January and the new year with new hopes and resolutions. The poet is himself in a mood of despondency and misery and says that he falls upon the thorns of life and is bleeding. He is seeking reawakening also through the poem and wants the wind to carry his dead thoughts and ideas like it has taken the leaves and wants fresh ideas to take birth. This is possible only if he first gets rid of stale ideas and thoughts and learns to replace them with new ones. In that sense even the poet is feeling a sort of intellectual deaths and is desirous of being given a new lease of life. " Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere-

Destroyer and Preserver-hear, O hear!"

Shelley's idea of the Islands of Delight as expressed in ' Lines Written among the Euganean Hills', is merely a product of an unfounded optimism and has

no logical bearing. Shelley's faith is no doubt genuine and intense, but it comes from his abstract visions, not from sound logical reasoning. He is ever haunted by the Eternal Mind. He constantly endeavours to look beyond the evil of life and chases the invisible and impalpable. He gives various names to this unattainable thing. In his Hymn To Intellectual Beauty, he describes it as the spirit of Beauty pervading the universe. He speaks of it as an "unseen power" that rarely visits human hearts as an 'awful loveliness' that can free this world from tyranny and oppression.

Thus, a profound note of yearning for the unattainable is another feature of Shelley's poetry. According to Cazamian, "The tone of Shelley's poetry is that of a keen aspiration, in which mystical desire, with its anguished pangs and spiritual raptures, transcends the joys and sufferings of ordinary mankind." Shelley is pessimistic about the present but optimistic about the future. He believes that regeneration always follows destruction and that a new and utopian order is certain to come when the present degenerate system is ended. His optimism about the imminent dawn of a golden age is genuine and firm and his prophecy of that millennium underlies most of his poems. In Ode to West Wind also this prophetic note is present and present with the greatest intensity of expression. "And, by the incarnation of this verse,

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

Shelley had a deep interest in ancient Greeks. His enthusiasm for the wisdom of the Greek philosophers is implicit in many of his poems. This gives

Shelley a sharper appreciation of natural forms and the theory that artists and poets must try to remove the worldly cover from objects and expose the underlying ideal prototype. Platonism appeals to him most because the guiding power behind the ideal forms serves him in lieu of a religion. In 'Adonais', Shelley's Platonism has found the most elaborate expression. Like the other Romantic poets, Shelley too was an ardent lover of Nature. Like Wordsworth, Shelley conceives of Nature as one spirit, the Supreme Power working through all things "The one spirit's plastic distress/ Sweeps through the dull dense world." Again he personifies each object of nature as an individual life, a part of that Supreme Power, Nature.

He celebrates nature in most of his poems as his main theme such as "The Cloud", "To a Skylark", and "To the Moon". "Ode to the West Wind", "A Dream of the Unknown". The tone of pessimism set in the beginning with 'dead', 'ghosts', 'corpse in grave' reaches its climax with 'I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed'. In the last stanzas the poet moves from the natural to the human misery and the mention of the hearth combines the two because hearth is seen as the centre of the earth where the natural world and the human one merge. The poet is seeking transcendence into the sublime as did Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey. The affinity of temper between them prompts the poet to appeal to the Wind to save him from his present plight. At this hour of distress the poet can look upon the Wind as a competent savior, a symbol of aid and relief. Finally, the West Wind is treated by the poet as representing the forces that can help bring about the golden

millennium, when the miseries and agonies of mankind will be replaced by all round happiness. " The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness."

Shelley shows no sense of history and cannot put forth the cause and remedies of the evils he finds in human society. He has an intense belief that regeneration of mankind is imminent but cannot tell us why and how it is coming. His West Wind is a symbol of the forces that will bring about this regeneration: it is nothing more. He has never told us what these forces symbolized by the wind are in reality. Shelley belongs to the younger generation of Romantic poets. Like the other two poets of his generation, he died young. His poetry divided itself into two distinct moods. In one he is the violent reformer seeking to overthrow the present institutions' in order to bring about the Golden Age. " Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst:-O hear!"

Sometimes Shelley becomes pantheistic in his concept of nature when he seems to believe that every aspect of nature is a manifestation of only one and invisible soul or spirit and that after the end of the earthly existence, everything is reunited with that one soul. "...that sustaining love

Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea."

Shelley's lyrics are surpassingly musical and sweet. Swinburne was ecstatic

in his tribute to this aspect of Shelley's lyricism. Shelley out sang all poets on record, but some two or three throughout all time; his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as diverse as nature's and not sooner exhaustible. He was alone the perfect singing God; his thoughts words and deeds all sang together. Arnold, one of the worst critics of Shelley, admired his music and remarked: " the right sphere of Shelley's genius was the sphere of music." Shelley's careful handling of diction fitting into the sense of his lines enhances the musical quality keeping with the swift, of his lyrics.

The rhythm of Ode to the West Wind is thus exactly in gusty march of the wind itself: " O wild West Wind, thou breathe of Autumn's being." Shelley never allows morbidity to overcome the enjoyment in his lyrics. Self-pity is no doubt his favorite theme, but in his lyrics, he presents this self-pity, not as something to be feared, but as an essential part of life. Shelley's readers are never depressed because they are constantly reminded that sufferings lie only in the present and that in future all sufferings will be replaced by pure happiness. His despondency is soon replaced by an ecstatic rapture of joy when he comes to think of the future happiness of mankind, of the millennium to come: " If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Shelley calls the west wind a destroyer and a preserver at the same time. It is a destroyer because it makes the trees shed their leaves making them bare. The west wind is called a preserver since it carries the seeds to places where they lie in hibernation during the winter and when the sister of west wind, the east wind blows in spring time, they start to germinate and blossom into many different colored flowers. Winter is often seen as death

since plants die and many animals hide themselves for the season. The earth looks barren and appears lifeless but spring is a time of rejuvenation, flowers blossom and insects and animals begin to start life again. The poet gives the credit of carrying the seeds to a safer place in winter to the west wind. This way it becomes the destroyer and the preserver. "(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in the air)

With living hues and odours plain and hill-

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere-

Destroyer and Preserver -hear, O hear!"

This co-existence of pessimism and optimism-the swift replacement of one by the other-is a major attractive feature of Shelley's lyric poetry. This poem is considered to be one of the finest lyrics in English poetry because of its sentiments and the perfect technical construction. The poet touches on the four elements- earth, sky, weather and fire and the transition from the wind to himself is very smooth one and does not feel enforced. It is a complex poem because of the number of similes and they do not appear to be enforced or excessive in any way. The movement of the wind from earth to sky and water is observed minutely by the poet keeping scientific facts in mind.

The symbolism of destroyer and preserver is carried through the poem; first with the wind driving the dead leaves away to make place for new ones, secondly with the mention of pumice isle which was built with the lava from a volcano. Volcano is both a destroyer and a preserver since while it erupts it pours forth fire but once it subsides it leaves behind valuable minerals and

fertile material. Finally, the poet's own thoughts are dead leaves to be driven away so that new ones can take their place. The theme of rebirth is thus an integral part of the poem. "A deep resolute mind rises above all difficulties"

The poet then describes how the wind carries loose clouds on its stream and spreads them from horizon to the height of the skies. The wind is the funeral song of the passing year because soon after autumn comes winter when the year ends and a new one begins. Winter is often seen as death since plants die and many animals hide themselves for the season. The earth looks barren and appears lifeless but spring is a time of rejuvenation, flowers blossom and insects and animals begin to start life again. The poet gives the credit of carrying the seeds to a safer place in winter to the west wind. This way it becomes the destroyer and the preserver. "Each like a corpse, within its grave, until

Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth,"

In his treatment of nature, he describes the things in nature as they are and never colours it. It is true, he gives them human life through his personifications, but he does it unintentionally for he felt they are living beings capable of doing the work of human beings. His mythopoeia power had made him the best romanticist of his age. In Ode to the West Wind, he personifies Nature as the Destroyer and the Preserver, and in "The Cloud", the cloud is a possessor of mighty powers. "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!"

Shelley holds a unique place in English literature by virtue of his power of making myths out of the objects and forces of Nature. Beauty, to Shelley, is an ideal in itself and a microcosm of the beauty of Nature and he calls it 'Intellectual Beauty'. He celebrates Beauty as a mysterious power. In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, he says that when Intellectual Beauty departs, this world becomes a "dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate" and if human heart is its temple, then man would become immortal and omnipotent: "Man were immortal and omnipotent

Did'st thou, unknown and awful as thou art
Keep with thy glorious train firm state
Within his heart."

The West Wind is the breath of Autumn. Dead leaves, black, yellow and red in colour, fly before the wind, as the ghosts fly before a magician. The West Wind scatters the flying seeds. The seeds lie under the ground and when Spring comes, they grow into flowers of different colours and fragrance. The West Wind destroys dead leaves and preserves useful seeds. "Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is:

What if my leaves are falling like its own!"

The spirit of the west wind is described as 'uncontrollable'. The west wind is unstoppable and it affects everything that falls in its path. It affects the earth, the water in the oceans and the clouds of the sky. It is responsible for carrying them and locking them up in a sepulcher till they burst forth in fury

of rain and hail. The poet thinks that the west wind has a free spirit and wanders as and where it pleases. He admires it for its freedom and wishes the wind would carry him along like a leaf or a cloud. Shelley then sums up the spirit of the west wind as 'tameless, swift and proud.' It cannot be kept in check so it is 'tameless', the speed of the west wind is formidable and it is proud because it would not listen to any one. Finally, the poet refers the west wind as 'Spirit fierce' and 'impetuous one' that acts on the impulse of the moment. "The sea-blossoms and the oozy woods which wear

The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear

And tremble and despoil themselves: —— O hear!"

The Wind blows through the jungle and produces music out of the dead leaves. Shelley requests it to create music out of his heart and to inspire him to write great poetry, which may create a revolution in the hearts of men. He wants the Wind to scatter his revolutionary message in the world, just as it scatters ashes and sparks from a burning fire. His thoughts may not be as fiery as they once were, but they still have the power to inspire men. He tells the Wind to take the message to the sleeping world that if winter comes, spring cannot be far behind. In optimistic note he declares that bad days are followed by good days. "Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams

The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,

Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,

And saw in sleep old palaces and towers,"

Idealism is a part and parcel of Shelley's temperament. He is a rebel, like Byron, against the age-old customs, traditions, conventions and institutions, sanctioned only by practice and not by reason. Unlike Byron, but, he is not only a rebel but also a reformer. He wants to reconstitute society in keeping with his ideals of good, truth and beauty. According to Compton- Rickett, "To renovate the world, to bring about utopia, is his constant aim, and for this reason we may regard Shelley as emphatically the poet of eager, sensitive youth; not the animal youth of Byron, but the spiritual youth of the visionary and reformer." Poetry is the expression of the poet's mind. This is absolutely true of Shelley's poetry. A study of Shelley's poetry is the easiest and shortest way to his mind and personality. The fourth Stanza of Ode to the West Wind is entirely personal and autobiographical.

An analogy with the West Wind helps the poet describe his own spirit: "tameless, and swift, and proud." The poet narrates the change, he has undergone in the course of his life. He was full of energy, enthusiasm and speed in his boyhood, but the agonies and bitterness of life-" A heavy weight of hours"-has repressed his qualities and has put him in an unbearable state. The expression of his sufferings " I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" is intensely genuine, heart-rending, and possibly the most spontaneous of Shelley's emotional outbursts through his poems. The calm Mediterranean was sleeping. The music of the glassy waves lulled the ocean to sleep. It was dreaming of towers and palaces reflected in its water. The West Wind creates furrows on the smooth waters of the Atlantic Ocean. At the bottom of the Atlantic grow plants and vegetation. These plants are dry, without sap

though they live in water. When the West Wind blows in autumn, the plants on the land wither; the plants at the bottom of the ocean also fade and die. "Quivering within the wave's intenser day,"

Shelley is describing the approach of the terrible West Wind. In the regions of the sky. Shelley's emotional ecstasy fires his brain to that kind of superb conception which made the ancient Greeks fill the earth, the air and the water with gods and goddesses who were but personifications of the forces of nature. "Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul." The cloud form on the horizon, gather up in the sky and then darken the space. The sky is at first blue, but it assumes a dark appearance on the approach of the vaporous clouds. From the distant and dim horizon to the highest point in the sky, the whole visible space is filled by the movements of the air. The clouds are up and spread themselves. The scattered and disorderly clouds look like the locks of the mighty West Wind personified, as seen approaching through the sky; these locks resemble the dishevelled and erect hair on the heads of intoxicated and frenzied female worshippers of the wine-god who used to dance madly about. "The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,

As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed

Scarce seem'd a vision,-"

These lines are very touching and highly characteristic of Shelley. Shelley was a rebel and a revolutionary. He had a restless temperament which was even at war with something. In the West Wind, Shelley finds a kindred spirit. Looking at it, he is reminded of his youth when he too was free and

uncontrollable. At that time, he did not think it an impossibility to vie with the West Wind in its speed, but the worries and mysteries of this life have proved too much for him and have made him tame and weak. He had lost his old vigour and force, and he appeals to the West Wind to lend him some strength and lift his dejected spirit as it lifts a cloud, wave or a leaf. He was very much oppressed by the hardships of the world and he wants somebody to support him through his struggle for existence in this world.

He was indeed tameless and wild like the West Wind at one time, but now he is bowed down by the worries and care, and calls for help. Next, Shelley describes the agitated surface of the ocean cuts a thousand deep passages on itself for the march of the terrific wind; while the rush and tumult on the surface reach the vegetable world at the bottom of the ocean, the leaves, the flowers, the sapless forests there tremble with fear and are shaken loose pell-mell at the awful roar of the mighty wind. Desmond King-Hele remarks: "The verse technique and structure of the Ode to West Wind could scarcely be improved: it is the most fully orchestrated of Shelley's poems, and consequently the most difficult to read aloud. The ever fluctuating tempo and the artfully random pauses in the long lines reflect the lawless surging of the wind and its uneasy silences.

This device is not overworked: the wonder is that Shelley could use it at all when grappling with the problems of the terza rima and operating within a rigid structural framework. In conformity with this framework, which seemed to be in the Style of Calderon, the first three Stanzas are designed to show the wind's power in three spheres of Nature, in preparation for the prayer to

the Wind, as pseudo-god, in Stanzas 4 and 5. The keynote of the first three Stanzas is balanced. Their settings, land, sky and sea, give equal emphasis to the three states of matter, solid, gaseous and liquid. Each of the four seasons has its appointed place, and there is a full range of colours- red, yellow, blue, grey and black explicitly, white and green implicitly.

Turmoil is balanced against calm, life against death, detail against generalization, cold against calm, life against death, detail against generalization, cold against warmth, plain against hill, and so on. The varied evidence of Stanzas 1-3 is assembled in support of the narrow, one-track theme in the last two stanzas: the plan is sound, but in points of detail it falls short of perfection. For Shelley harps on his prayer rather too long. His defeatism becomes a trifle depressing, unless when reading the poem we happen to be in the same mood as he was...the note of self-pity is overplayed in the last two Stanzas; and this must be counted a blemish in what is otherwise a nearly faultless poem."