

# French Revolution and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind”: The Strong Voice of Revolutionary Spirit

Dr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad\*, Dr. Md. Sazzad Hossain<sup>2</sup>

\* Associate Professor, Department of English, Dhaka International University, Dhaka (Corresponding Author)

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of English, Dhaka International University, Dhaka

---

## Abstract

The slogan of the French Revolution—the freedom of speech, the freedom of choice, and the freedom of movement—the liberty, that is sought throughout the world crossing the frontiers of France and the greater Europe, has become the spiritual strength of the Romantic poets like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Romanticism, that begins with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, just one year before the end of the French Revolution in 1799, continues to grow in reaction to the effects of the social transformation caused by the Revolution. In the opinion of Thomas Carlyle, “The French Revolution plays a strong and vital role that influences the Romantic writers. As the Revolution begins to play out the absolute monarchy, that had ruled France for centuries after centuries and collapsed in only three years, the spirit of it results in a complete transformation of society” (Carlyle, 1906). In the words of Albert Hancock, “The French Revolution came, bringing with it the promise of a brighter day, the promise of regenerated man and regenerated earth. It was hailed with joy and acclamation by the oppressed, by the ardent lovers of humanity, by the poets, whose task it is to voice the human spirit” (Hancock, 1899). Percy Bysshe Shelley is highly influenced by the Revolution that is reflected in his poems, particularly in “Ode to the West Wind” (1819), originally published in 1820 by Charles Ollier in London as part of the collection *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts, with Other Poems*, where the ‘Wind’ becomes the trope for spreading the word of change through the poetic speculations. The spirit of French Revolution is fully reflected in the poem where Shelley invites the young generation of his own time as well as the following generations to bring a rapid change in the society they live. This paper proposes to investigate how the Revolution influences Romantic poetry, particularly Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” to spread the message of the Revolution through his poetic speculations in the young minds of his readers that fuels new thoughts and ideas into the future researchers.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, Romanticism, spirit of revolution, social change, poetic speculations, regeneration, and new era.

---

Date of Submission: 27-12-2024

Date of acceptance: 07-01-2025

---

## I. Introduction

### Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822), a Romantic English poet of a very short span of life who died at the age of thirty years only like another Romantic English poet John Keats (31 October 1795 – 23 February 1821) who died at the age of twenty five, and Bengali poet Sukanta Bhattacharya (15 August 1926 – 13 May 1947) who died at the age of twenty one. Shelley was born during the historic period of French Revolutions that begins in 1789 and ends in 1799, and so the spirit of the Revolution was in his blood. According to Harold Bloom, “Shelley did not achieve fame during his lifetime, but recognition of his achievements in poetry grew steadily following his death, and he became an important influence on subsequent generations of poets, including Robert Browning, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Thomas Hardy, and W. B. Yeats” (Bloom, 2004). Leader and O’Neill add to the upbringing genius of this poet, “Shelley’s reputation fluctuated during the 20th century, but since the 1960s he has achieved increasing critical acclaim for the sweeping momentum of his poetic imagery, his mastery of genres and verse forms, and the complex interplay of sceptical, idealist, and materialist ideas in his work” (Leader, 2003; O’Neill, 2013). During his very short span of life, Shelley makes some remarkable contributions to the development of Romantic writings. Among his best-known works are “Ozymandias” (1818), “Ode to the West Wind” (1819), “To a Skylark” (1820), “Adonais” (1821), the philosophical essay “The Necessity of Atheism” (1811), which his friend T. J. Hogg may have co-authored, and the political ballad “The Mask of Anarchy” (1819). His other major works include the verse dramas *The Cenci* (1819), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) and *Hellas* (1822), and the long narrative poems *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude* (1815), *Julian and Maddalo* (1819), *Adonais* (1821), and *The Triumph*

*of Life* (1822) (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia). But Shelley's life was marked by family crises, ill health, and a backlash against his atheism, political views, and defiance of social conventions. He went into permanent self-exile in Italy in 1818, and over the next four years produced, what Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill call "some of the finest poetry of the Romantic period" (Leader and O'Neill, 2003). His second wife, Mary Shelley, was the author of *Frankenstein*. He died in a boating accident in 1822 at the age of 30.

About the glorious birth of P. B. Shelley, James Bieri says, "Shelley was born on 4 August 1792 at Field Place, Warnham, Sussex, England. He was the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, [the] 2nd Baronet of Castle Goring (1753–1844), a Whig Member of Parliament for Horsham from 1790 to 1792 and for Shoreham between 1806 and 1812, and his wife, Elizabeth Pilfold (1763–1846), the daughter of a successful butcher" (Bieri, 2008). From James Bieri and Richard Holmes, we come to know that "He had four younger sisters and one much younger brother.

Shelley's early childhood was sheltered and mostly happy. He was particularly close to his sisters and his mother, who encouraged him to hunt, fish and ride" (Holmes, 1974; Bieri, 2004). Richard Holmes adds that "[a]t [the] age [of] six, he was sent to a day school run by the vicar of Warnham [C]hurch, where he displayed an impressive memory and gift for languages" (Holmes, 1974). In 1802, Shelley entered the Syon House Academy of Brentford, Middlesex, and two years later in 1804, he entered Eton College. Shelley was bullied and unhappy at the school and sometimes responded with violent rage. He also began suffering from the nightmares, hallucinations and sleep walking that were to periodically affect him throughout his life. Shelley developed an interest in science which supplemented his voracious reading of tales of mystery, romance and the supernatural (Medwin, 1847; Holmes, 1974). During his stay at Eton, he was subjected to particularly severe mob bullying which the perpetrators called "Shelley-baits". A number of biographers and contemporaries have attributed the bullying to Shelley's aloofness, nonconformity and refusal to take part in fagging. His peculiarities and violent rages earned him the nickname "Mad Shelley" (Holmes, 1974; Gilmour, 2002; Bieri, 2004). During his growing years, Shelley also developed an interest in Plato and idealist philosophy which he pursued in later years through self-study. And Shelley, by his leaving year, had gained a reputation as a classical scholar and a tolerated eccentric (Notopoulos, 1949; Holmes, 1974).

Shelley earns the glories of being an Oxford scholar, and prior to enrolling for University College, Oxford, in October 1810, he completes *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* written collaboratively with his sister Elizabeth, then he writes the verse melodrama *The Wandering Jew* and the gothic novel *St. Irvine; or, The Rosicrucian: A Romance* published in 1811 (Holmes, 1974; O'Neill, 2004). At Oxford, Shelley attends scholarly lectures, and in his room, he spends long hours in reading and conducting scientific experiments in the laboratory he sets up himself. He meets a fellow student, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, who becomes his closest friend. Shelley becomes increasingly politicised under Hogg's influence, developing strong radical and anti-Christian views. Such views were dangerous in the reactionary political climate prevailing during Britain's War with Napoleonic France, and Shelley's father warned him against Hogg's influence (Holmes, 1974).

In the winter of 1810–1811, Shelley publishes a series of anonymous political poems and tracts: "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson", "The Necessity of Atheism", written in collaboration with Hogg, and "A Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things". Shelley mailed "The Necessity of Atheism" to all the Bishops and Heads of Colleges at Oxford, and then he was called to appear before the college's fellows, including the Dean, George Rowley. His refusal to answer questions put by college authorities regarding whether or not he authored the pamphlet resulted in his expulsion from Oxford on 25 March 1811, along with Hogg. Hearing of his son's expulsion, Shelley's father threatened to cut all contact with Shelley unless he agreed to return home and study under tutors appointed by him. Shelley's refusal to do so led to a falling-out with his father (Holmes, 1974).

Finally, let us talk about the conjugal life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was able to live only thirty years in earth. According to Richard Holmes, Shelley first married the sixteen-year-old Harriet Westbrook on 28 August 1811 in Edinburgh. Harriet gave birth to a girl, Eliza Ianthe Shelley, but their Edinburgh wedding fell in trouble following Ianthe's birth. In May 1814, Shelley began visiting his mentor William Godwin (1756–1836) almost daily, and soon fell in love with Mary, the sixteen-year-old daughter of William Godwin and the late feminist author Mary Wollstonecraft. Shelley and Mary declared their love for each other and married. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1797–1851) was called Mary Shelley or Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley after their marriage. She was an English novelist who wrote the Gothic novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), which is considered an early example of science fiction (Aldiss, 1973). On the other hand, William Godwin was famous for his *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793), a book by the philosopher, in which the author outlines his political philosophy. It is the first modern work to elucidate anarchism (Chisholm, 1911). Harriet was intelligent, well-read, and charming, though obviously very young, and for a time, she involved herself wholeheartedly in her husband's various literary and political projects. She at last gave birth to a son whose name was Charles. On the other hand, pregnancy and childbirth, as well as death, was an integral part of Mary Shelley's young adult life. She

had four children and one miscarriage that almost killed her. This was all before the age of twenty-five. Only one of her children, Percy Florence Shelley, survived to adulthood and outlived her, who became the Third Baronet of Castle Goring (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia).

### **The French Revolution**

According to the ideas and observations of James Livesey and Ferenc Fehér, the French Revolution was a terrific period of socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic changes in France that began with the convocation of the Estates General of 1789, and ended with the coup of 18 Brumaire on 9 November 1799 resulted in the formation of the French Consulate. Many ideas of the Revolution are considered fundamental principles of liberal democracy, while its values and institutions remain central not only to the modern French political discourse, but also to the world-wide factors of making a general slogan for all generations of all nations of all times—the freedom of speech, the freedom of choice, and the freedom of movement (Fehér,1990; Livesey,2001).

The combination of social, political, and economic factors, which the old regime proved unable to manage, were the root causes of the Revolution. The strong financial crisis and widespread social distress of the nation led to the convocation of the Estates General in May 1789, which was its first meeting since 1614. The representatives of the Third Estate had broken away, and they re-constituted themselves as the National Assembly in June 1789. The Storming of the Bastille in Paris on 14 July was followed by a series of radical measures taken by the Assembly, among them the abolition of feudalism, state control over the Catholic Church, and a declaration of rights were mentionable. The next three years were dominated by the struggle for political control, and military defeats following the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars in April 1792 led to an insurrection on 10 August 1792. The monarchy was replaced by the French First Republic on 21 September 1792, and Louis XVI was executed on 21 January 1793 (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia).

The constitution was suspended, and adequate political power was transferred from the National Convention to the Committee of Public Safety after another revolt in June 1793 led by the Jacobins. During the period of the Reign of Terror, nearly 16,000 people were executed that ended on 27 July 1794. With the growing external threats and internal opposition, the French First Republic started losing its strength, and then it was replaced by the Directory in 1795. But four years later on 9 November 1799, the Consulate seized the whole state power through a military coup led by Napoleon Bonaparte which is generally seen as marking the end of the French Revolution (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia).

### **Romanticism and the French Revolution**

Wikipedia defines Romanticism as an aesthetic movement which originated in Europe towards the end of the 18th century. In most parts of Europe, the Romantic Movement was at its peak from approximately 1800 with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 to 1850 with the death of William Wordsworth. The Romantic Age was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism as well as glorification of the past and nature, preferring the medieval to the classical. This artistic and intellectual movement was partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, and the prevailing ideology of the Age of Enlightenment, especially the scientific rationalization of Nature. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature; it also had a major impact on historiography, education, chess, social sciences, and the natural sciences (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia).

The Romantic Movement has a significant and complex effect on politics: Romantic thinking influences conservatism, liberalism, radicalism, and nationalism. The Movement emphasizes intense emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience. It grants a new importance to experiences of sympathy, awe, wonder, and terror, in part by naturalizing such emotions as responses to the "beautiful" and the "sublime". The Romantics not only stress the nobility of folk art and ancient cultural practices, but also champion the radical politics, unconventional behavior, and authentic spontaneity. In contrast to the rationalism and classicism of the Enlightenment, Romanticism revives medievalism and juxtaposes a pastoral conception of a more 'authentic' European past with a highly critical view of recent social changes including urbanization brought about by the Industrial Revolution (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia).

There was a very common theme, among some of the most widely known romantic poets such William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, and particularly Percy Bysshe Shelley, that is their acceptance and approval of the French Revolution. All of these Romantics share the same view of the French Revolution as it being the beginning of a change in the current ways of society that helps improve the lives of the oppressed. As the Revolution changed the lives of virtually everyone in the nation of France as well as even the whole European continent because of its drastic and immediate shift in social reformation, it greatly influenced many writers at the time. Hancock rightly says, "There is no need to recount here in detail how the French Revolution, at the close of the last century, was the great stimulus to the intellectual and emotional life of the civilized world, how it began by inspiring all liberty-loving men with hope and joy"(Hancock, 1899).

It was visible that literature began to take a very new quick turn when the spirit of the Revolution caught the entire nation of France and other surrounding countries in a whole new direction. And it was observed that the newly acquired freedom of the common people did not only bring about just fair laws and justice along with the smooth living but the ordinary people also got back their liberty to think for themselves with the new spirit of the Revolution with the guarantee of expressing themselves. So, triggered by the revolutionary spirit, the writers of the time of France and out of France were full of creative ideas who were seemed to be waiting for a chance to unleash them for a long time. Under the new laws and justice, the writers and artists of that time were given a considerable amount of freedom to express themselves which did well to pave the way to set a high standard for literature (Gregory, 1915).

We can truly rely on David Daiches, who rightly observes that prior to the French Revolution, poems and literature were typically written about and to the aristocrats and the clergy, and rarely for or about the working man, that is, the common and ordinary people. However, when the roles of society began to shift resulting from the French Revolution, and with the emergence of Romantic writers, this had been quickly changed (Daiches, 1960). Since then the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley have been seen to start writing poems for and about the working class of people; their pieces of works actually relate to the common men and women, no doubt, with rustic thoughts and pleasure. According to Christensen, "To get the real animating principle of the Romantic Movement, one must not study it inductively or abstractly; one must look at it historically. It must be put beside the literary standards of the eighteenth century. These standards impose limits upon the Elysian fields of poetry; poetry must be confined to the common experience of average men... The Romantic Movement then means the revolt of a group of contemporary poets who wrote, not according to common and doctrinaire standards, but as they individually pleased... [T]here are no principles comprehensive and common to all except those of individualism and revolt" (Christensen, 2000). However, the spirit of the Revolution is highly reflected in almost all poems by the famous Romantic writers to create regeneration.

### **Objective of the Research**

To trace the influence of the French Revolution into the thoughts and ideas of the writers of the Romantic period through the special emphasis on the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, particularly his "Ode to the West Wind" is the solemn objective of this research. The readers of this research, hopefully, can find a new way out through the scholastic exploration of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" that enlightens the young and energetic energy to spread the sense of liberty in all spheres of life. The research also aims at opening the doors of new speculations and study on the spirits of the French Revolution through the lenses of the Romantic poems.

## **II. Methodology of the Research**

This is a collaborative research done by two university teachers of the Department of English. The researchers have followed here the qualitative method of study based on the APA style of its seventh edition both in in-text citations and referencing. For citation, the original works of the critics and scholars have been chosen as the secondary source of study. And for the textual analysis, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" has been used as the primary source for citation and discussion. The short biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley and the short histories of the French Revolution and Romanticism have been discussed here as the background of the study.

## **III. The Review of Literature**

Ashish Gupta and Riyaz Ahmad Pir make some wonderful observations about the status and position of Percy Bysshe Shelley as a romantic versus revolutionary poet: "Percy Bysshe Shelley was the most revolutionary and non-conformist of the Romantic poets. His passionate search for personal love and social justice is shown in his poems—which are some of the greatest in the English language. He was an individualist and idealist who rejected the institutions of family, church, marriage and the Christian faith and rebelled against all forms of tyranny. Shelley's ideas were anarchic and he was considered dangerous by the conservative society of his time" (Ashish & Pir, 2016). These two scholars add to their comments about the revolutionary poet, "Shelley lived during a period of unprecedented change. In almost every sphere of life – social, political, religious—long-held beliefs and opinions were being questioned and, in some cases, undermined" (Ashish & Pir, 2016). "These changes are, to some extent, reflected in the work of the other younger Romantic poets among whom Shelley is usually grouped. Byron and Keats did respond to the political situation which prevailed in Europe during the first years of the nineteenth-century, and many of these changes in society are reflected in these poems; but Shelley is the only poet of the period who engages his audience [readers] directly in such debates and who holds firmly to the belief that poetry can actually transform the social order into something new and better," Ashish Gupta and Riyaz Ahmad Pir continues (Ashish & Pir, 2016).

According to Isaiah Berlin, Romanticism embodied "a new and restless spirit, seeking violently to burst through old and cramping forms, a nervous preoccupation with perpetually changing inner states of consciousness, a longing for the unbounded and the indefinable, for perpetual movement and change, an effort to return to the forgotten sources of life, a passionate effort at self-assertion both individual and collective, a search after means of expressing an unappeasable yearning for unattainable goals" (Berlin, 2013). Romantic artists also shared a strong belief in the importance and inspirational qualities of Nature. Romantics were distrustful of cities and social conventions. They deplored Restoration and Enlightenment Era artists who were largely concerned with depicting and critiquing social relations, thereby neglecting the relationship between people and Nature. Romantics generally believed a close connection with Nature was beneficial for human beings, especially for individuals who broke off from society in order to encounter the natural world by themselves (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia).

About the impact of the French Revolution, so many scholars and critics have made their remarks and observations: The French Revolution had a major impact on western history, by ending feudalism in France and creating a path for advances in individual freedoms throughout Europe. The revolution represented the most significant challenge to political absolutism up to that point in history and spread democratic ideals throughout Europe and ultimately the world. Its impact on French nationalism was profound, while also stimulating nationalist movements throughout Europe. Some modern historians argue the concept of the nation state was a direct consequence of the revolution. As such, the revolution is often seen as marking the start of modernity and the modern period (Palmer & Colton, 1995; Fehér, 1990; Riemer & Simon, 1997; Dann & Dinwiddy, 1988; Keitner, 2007; Spang, 2003).

An ode was considered a form of formal public invocation in ancient Greek tradition. It was usually a poem with a complex structure that was chanted or sung on important religious or state ceremonies. But according to Harold Bloom, "Ode to the West Wind" reflects two types of ode traditions: odes written by the ancient Greek lyric poet Pindar and the Roman Octavian lyric poet Horace. The Pindaric odes were exalted in tone and celebrated human accomplishments, whereas the Horatian odes were personal and contemplative rather than public. Percy Bysshe Shelley combines the two elements in this poem. In English tradition, Bloom adds, the ode was more of a vehicle for expressing the sublime, lofty thoughts of intellectual and spiritual concerns rather than the tone and structure. This purpose is also reflected in Shelley's odes, particularly in "Ode to the West Wind" (Bloom, 2001).

### **Critical Analysis**

A note on "Ode to the West Wind" from the publisher tells that "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 mild 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. The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it" (Ollier, 1820). Some readers assume that the note was of Shelley's himself. Whatever it may be, the note clears the mood and tone of the poet and atmosphere of the time when the poem of five stanzas was composed.

In the poem, the speaker is Shelley himself, who directly addresses the 'West Wind' and treats it as a force of death and decay, and finally, welcomes this death and decay as the means of rejuvenation and rebirth that will come soon. The poet suggests that he wants to help promote this rebirth through his own poetry, and the rejuvenation that he hopes to see is both political and poetic: a rebirth of society and its ways of new writing. Shelley says, the 'West Wind' is the breath of Autumn. The dead leaves of blue, yellow, and red colours fly before the wind, as the ghosts fly before a magician. He adds that the 'West Wind' scatters the flying seeds that lie under the ground; but when Spring comes, they grow into flowers of different colours and fragrances. Thus, Shelley concludes the first stanza of his lyric, the 'West Wind' destroys dead leaves and preserves useful seeds:  
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear! (Shelley, 13-14)

In the second stanza, the poet declares that the "West Wind" scatters the clouds in the sky that seem to be the leaves of the intertwined branches of the trees of 'Heaven and Ocean'. The stormy sea and the sky seem to be meeting together. The clouds flying with the storm look like the hair of the fairies flying in the wind. Shelley says, these clouds are the signals of the upcoming rain and storm. The sound of the 'Wind' is like the funeral song of the year that is dying. The last night is like the dome of the grave of the dying year. The participants of the funeral procession are vapour, hail, rain, and lightning:

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere

Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear! (Shelley, 27-28)

The stanza three talks about Shelley's aesthetic views of poetic imagination. There he says, the clam Mediterranean was sleeping, and 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' here 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; but at the same time, the plants at the bottom of the ocean also fade and die:

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 gray with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear! (Shelley, 36-42)

In the fourth stanza, the poet expresses his mad desire to become a dead leaf or cloud flying with the 'West Wind' or a wave feeling the power of the wind. He wishes he were a boy once again, when he thought that he could beat the wind in running races. But actually, these are not likely to happen. So, he appeals to the storm to lift him as like the 'West Wind' just as 'tameless, and swift, and proud':

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! (Shelley, 53-54)

The fifth stanza of the poem tells that the 'West Wind' blows through the jungle and produces music out of the dead leaves. The poet here requests the 'Wind' to create music out of his own heart so that he can get inspiration to write great poetry, which may create a revolution in the hearts of men. Shelley here invites the 'Wind' to scatter his revolutionary message throughout the world, just as it scatters ashes and sparks from a burning fire. He realizes that 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 carry the message to the sleeping world that if Winter comes, Spring cannot be far behind:

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 unextinguish'd hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth. (Shelley, 63-68)

It is saying that poetry is the expression of the poet's mind. This is absolutely true in the case of Shelley's poetry. Throughout the poem, Shelley describes the 'West Wind' as a powerful and destructive force: it drives away Summer, and brings instead Winter through storms, chaos, and even death. Yet the speaker celebrates the 'Wind' and welcomes the destruction that it causes, because it leads to renewal and rebirth, he believes. Shelley's personal outlooks about the feedback of the French Revolution have been clearly reflected in the fiery words of his lyric. He knows very well that the 'West Wind' is not peaceful or pleasant. And so, he addresses it as thus, "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 ..." Autumn is a transitional season when Summer's abundance begins to fade. So, in the same way, the 'West Wind' drives away peace and abundance with its 'wild' and violent strength. The 'Wind' strips the leaves from the trees, whips up the sky, and causes huge storms on the ocean. In the first section of the poem, the speaker compares the dead leaves the 'West Wind' blows to 'ghosts' and 'pestilence-stricken multitudes.' And the 'West Wind' turns the fall colours into something scary, associated with sickness and death.

The clouds in the poem's second section look like the "bright hair uplifted from the head / Of some fierce Mænad." In Greek mythology, the Mænads were the female followers of Dionysus, the god of wine. They were famous for their wild parties and wild dancing, and they are often portrayed with their hair askew. The 'West Wind' thus makes the clouds wild and drunk. It creates chaos. Unlike the flavour of Spring that spreads sweet smells and beautiful flowers, the poet willingly associates the 'West Wind' with chaos and death. Giving

the reference of chaos and death Shelley reminds of the death and destruction during the Revolution. Because he believes that regeneration follows destruction. So, despite the destructive power of the 'West Wind' the poet celebrates it—because such destruction is necessary for rebirth. He notes at the end of the poem's first section, the 'West Wind' is both a 'destroyer' and a 'preserver.' The traditional names of two Hindu gods, for example, Shiva and Vishnu. Vishnu's role is to preserve the world; Shiva is supposed to destroy it. The 'West Wind' combines these two opposite figures. As the poet announces in the final lines—"O Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"—the 'West Wind' is able to merge these opposites because death is required for life, as Winter for Spring. In order to have the beautiful renewal and rebirth that Spring promises, one needs the powerful and destructive force of the 'West Wind'.

#### IV. Conclusion

Throughout the poem, Percy Bysshe Shelley marks his revolutionary mood and tone just like the 'West Wind'. He praises and celebrates the power of the 'West Wind' —it is destructive and chaotic—but yet such destruction is necessary for rebirth and renewal. The poet so admires the 'Wind' that he wants to take, adopt, or absorb its power's into his poetic intelligence. He speaks with the 'Wind' directly, and describes himself as a diminished person: he is 'chain'd and bow'd.' Far from condemning the destructive power of the 'Wind', the speaker hopes the 'West Wind' will revive his own power of writing through which he will awake the world. At different points in the poem, the speaker has expressed different ideas of human civilization. The 'Wind' becomes the constant companion of the poet, an integral part of him. "Be thou me," the speaker tells the 'Wind'. The poet also proposes some more complicated interactions between himself and the 'Wind'. At one point, he asks the 'Wind', to "make me thy lyre, even as the forest is." In other words, he wants to be a musical instrument, specifically the lyre, the instrument that the poets of pastoral tradition play while they perform with their poems. In this case of "Ode to the West Wind", Shelley wants the helps of the 'Wind'—he wants to borrow the musical power from it. The poet does not play an active role as the 'Wind' does, and so he makes an appeal to it: "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe". The poet strongly wants to be the 'West Wind', because he wants to create something new, to clear away the old and the dead. Under the influence of the 'West Wind', the 'dead thoughts' of all human beings will 'quicken a new birth'—they will surely create something living and new. The poet does not say exactly what new thing he hopes to create. It might be a new kind of poetry, or it might be a new civilization, which will be totally free of terror and destruction. And finally, the poem might be interpreted as an emerging voice that calls for a change—a social change in all spheres of life in all times everywhere in the world to build a new era.

#### References

- [1]. Aldiss, B. (1973). Billion year spree: The true history of science fiction, 1st ed. New York City, NY: Doubleday.
- [2]. Bloom, H. (2004). The Best Poems of the English language, from Chaucer through Frost. New York: Harper Collins. p. 410.
- [3]. \_\_\_\_\_. (2001). Bloom's major poets: Percy Bysshe Shelley. New York: Chelsea House Books. pp. 49–65.
- [4]. Bieri, J. (2008). Percy Bysshe Shelley: A biography. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 19.
- [5]. \_\_\_\_\_. (2004). Percy Bysshe Shelley: A biography: Youth's unextinguished fire, 1792–1816. Newark: University of Delaware Press. pp. 55–57.
- [6]. Berlin, I. (2013). The roots of romanticism, 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- [7]. Carlyle, T. (1906). The French revolution: A history, vol. I. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd. pp. viii-xi, 45-50.
- [8]. Christensen, J. (2000). Romanticism at the end of history. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press. pp. 9-20, 72-74.
- [9]. Chisholm, H., ed. (1911). "Godwin, William." Encyclopædia Britannica. Vol. 12
- [10]. (11th ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. pp. 177–178.
- [11]. Dann, O. & Dinwiddy, J. (1988). Nationalism in the age of the French revolution. In Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies. Oxfordshire, England: Taylor & Francis.
- [12]. Daiches, D. (1960). A critical history of English literature, vol. 2. New York City, NY: Ronald Press Co. pp. 860-875.
- [13]. Gupta, A. & Pir, R. A. (2016). "Percy Bysshe Shelley as a revolutionary poet." In International Journal of Current Research, 8, (02), pp.26988-26993.
- [14]. Fehér, F. (1990). The French revolution and the birth of modernity, 1992 ed. California, USA: University of California Press.
- [15]. French Revolution. (28 December 2024). In Wikipedia. Retrieved on December 28, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution)
- [16]. Gilmour, I. (2002). Byron and Shelley: The making of the poets. New York: Carol & Graf Publishers. pp. 96–97.
- [17]. Gregory, A. (1915). "The French revolution and the English novel". New York City, NY: The Knickerbocker Press. pp. v-viii, 15-48, 270-282.
- [18]. Holmes, R. (1974). Shelley, the pursuit. London, England: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- [19]. Hancock, A. E. (1899). The French revolution and the English poets: A study in historical criticism. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. pp. 7, 45-79.
- [20]. Keitner, C. I. (2007). The paradoxes of nationalism: The French revolution and its meaning for contemporary nation building. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- [21]. Leader, Z. & O'Neill, M. (eds.) (2003). Percy Bysshe Shelley: The major works. Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press. pp. xi–xix.
- [22]. Livesey, J. (2001). Making democracy in the French revolution. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [23]. Medwin, T. (1847). The life of Percy Bysshe Shelley. London, England: Thomas Cautley Newby.
- [24]. Notopoulos, J. (1949). The platonism of Shelley. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. pp. 32–34.
- [25]. O'Neill, M. & Howe, A., eds. (2013). The Oxford handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 5.

- [26]. O'Neill, M. (2004). "Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792–1822)". Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Online ed.).Oxford,England: Oxford University Press.
- [27]. Palmer, R. R.& Colton, J. (1995). A history of the modern world. Alfred A Knopf. Riemer, N. & Simon, D. (1997). The new world of politics: An introduction to political science. Rowman & Littlefield.
- [28]. Romanticism. (13 December 2024). In Wikipedia. Retrieved on December 13, 2024, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>.
- [29]. Romanticism and the French Revolution. (9 December 2024). In Wikipedia. Retrieved on December 9, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism\\_and\\_the\\_French\\_Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism_and_the_French_Revolution).
- [30]. Spang, R. (2003). "Paradigms and paranoia: How modern is the French revolution?". In American Historical Review, 108 (1). Washington, D.C., USA: Oxford University Press.
- [31]. Shelley, P. B. (27 December 2024). In Wikipedia. Retrieved on December 27, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy\\_Bysshe\\_Shelley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Bysshe_Shelley).
- [32]. \_\_\_\_\_. (1820). "Ode to the West Wind".In Prometheus Unbound: A lyrical drama in four acts, with other poems. London, England: C and J Ollier.
- [33]. \_\_\_\_\_. (29 July 2011). "Shelley's Poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley cliffs notes - Study guide and help". Archived from the original on 5 March 2013. Retrieved on July 29, 2011.