

Myth and Art: A Mythological Study of *Ode to the West Wind* and *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*

Fatima Asif¹, Muhammad Adnan², Tahir Mahmood³, Tajalla Qureshi⁴ and Fatima Ijaz⁵

<https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2025.14.3.182>

Abstract

This research study explores the unique and artistic function of Greek mythology in the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the most remarkable poets of the Romantic age. The researcher examines mythical allusions in two of his selected poems, "Ode to the West Wind" and "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," investigating how the poet employs mythic elements and vivid imagery to articulate his philosophical vision. In "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the concept of "Intellectual Beauty" functions as a spiritual force—an unseen, powerful authority akin to the divine spirit or the Muses of Greek mythology. In contrast, "Ode to the West Wind" explicitly portrays the West Wind as a powerful divine force, embodying the dual role of destroyer and preserver. The study further examines how Greek mythological figures have shaped the poetic vision of English poets. Through a close reading of both selected poems, this research diary explores the use of mythological elements to address the notion of mythic deities and the function of such mythic machinery within Romantic lyric poetry. The analysis is rich in mythological allusions, revealing the strong connection between Shelley's verses and the broader influence of mythology on English literary art. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that classical literature continues to inspire and energize artists today.

Key words: Mythology, Intellectual Beauty, Wild West Wind. Zeus, Apollo, Greek Myths.

Introduction

Mythology, as defined by Campbell (2014), refers to a combination of traditional stories, which often involves gods, goddesses, and heroes, whose aim to serve and to tell the origin of this universe and the natural process. These myths are deeply rooted to the cultural and theological story telling of society and culture within the history.

In literature, mythology presents as a determined system of representation of archetypes, structures of narratives, and the representation of symbols. It is figured out from the stories of culture which come generation by generation. These stories, often highlights the aspect of supernatural elements, which appear as the basic fundamental layer for analyzing human condition, societal norms and cultural clichés. The impact of mythology on literature is very significant as it gives shape to the narrative structures, the patterns of characterization and exploration of themes (2025).

This research paper explores the crucial role of mythology in modern English Literature at deeper level. It digs out the historical transformation of mythology in English literature, from its origin to

¹ BS English, University of Chenab, Gujrat. Email: usamabuttk7@gmail.com

² Lecturer in English, University of Chenab, Gujrat. Email: adnanaliuos@gmail.com

³ LLM Scholar, University of Lahore (UOL) Punjab, Pakistan. Email: tahirnawaz222@gmail.com

⁴ MPhil Scholar, University of Chenab, Gujrat. Email: tajallaatiq1999@gmail.com

⁵ Lecturer in English, University of Chenab, Gujrat. Email: doc.fat89@gmail.com



its formation into English Literature during the period of Renaissance and its beyond. This research analyzes common themes of mythology. It also visualizes the aim of mythology in English Literature together with the use of allegory and symbolism comes from mythology. It discusses the effect of mythology on writing style and the techniques of narration, in contrast to the way used in mythological storytelling along with modern storytelling.

Furthermore, the paper argues about the role of interpretation and criticism setting the emphasis on English literature by mythology. The paper move forward with the notion how the writers of modern era re-write the myths for the upcoming audiences, featuring the everlasting connection of mythology with Literature.

This contemporary research paper visualize how English authors used mythic illusions into their works to identify the influence of mythos in present English fiction. For instance, *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope, mythic elements he used are, Ariel (the spirits of hover in the air, it also symbolizes the protection of beauty and vanity), Nymphs(water spirits represents graceful women), Salamanders(the fire spirits represents passion), Gnomes(the earth spirits influence darker emotions like jealousy) to ironize the hollowness of aristocratic society through mock-epic chunks(SCRIBD). *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, the lure references he used, Niobe (it is used as a comparison for a mother's grief),Hercules(uses this myth to create for Hamlet a kindred spirit in hero, he also use this myth to emphasize the idea of Hamlet's perceiving things and his life.), to reflect the emotion and descent comparison; to exclude personal sorrow to mythic level (2012).

One can easily see the bridge between P.B. Shelley's selected poems and mythology. In *Ode to the West Wind*, "*West Wind*" itself is an inclusive example of mythological god both "preserver" and "destroyer", exploring the idea of Traditional values who control nature. On the other hand, in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* the hidden soul of beauty works as a mythic presence, commanding sociality through wisdom. Through hymnic verbal, Shelley glorifies the tone of ancient classical prayers. Shelley presents an up-to-date form of myth making rather than reshaping cultural myths. He uses mythology in a way that he transforms the nature and unglorified ideals into holy forces that arouse creativity, ethical growth and rebirth. This kind of similarity with mythology mirrors the romantic faith that poetry can replace ancient myths by allowing new spiritual meanings engaging into the modern universe.

Problem Statement

Many researchers have discussed the different parameters of P.B. Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* and *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. Many researchers analyzed the different research protocols such as modernism romanticism, Ecocriticism and post colonialism in Shelley's remarkable poems *Ode to the West Wind* and *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* but there is no who had worked on the function of the Greek myth in the rhythm and the structure of the both verses. This is issue; the contemporary research skillfully and artistically deals with the issue and tackles with intricacies of both lyrics. The critical insight of the current research beautifully deals with criticality and poeticality in the light of mythical network. It also fills the gap which is missed in research studies and it utters a great and significant contribution in the field of research.

Research Objectives

- The primary aim of this study is to analyze the intersection of Hellenic tradition and Romantic idealism in P.B. Shelley's work. Specifically, the study seeks:

- To identify and decode specific Greek mythological allusions, such as the Maenads and Aeolus, within *Ode to the West Wind* and the personification of the Divine in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*.
- To evaluate the transformative role of myth, determining how Shelley "re-mythologizes" ancient figures to represent his own concepts of political revolution and spiritual transcendence.
- To examine the synthesis between classical pagan imagery and the "Intellectual Beauty" that Shelley posits as a modern, secular replacement for traditional deity.

Research Questions

These questions guide the critical inquiry into how Shelley utilizes Greek mythic motifs to achieve his poetic goals:

- **Symbolic Function:** In what ways does the use of the "Maenad" imagery in *Ode to the West Wind* transcend mere description to symbolize the chaotic yet creative force of the "Destroyer and Preserver"?
- **Philosophical Adaptation:** How does Shelley adapt the Greek concept of the daemon or spirit-medium in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* to articulate a beauty that is felt through its "shadow" rather than its direct presence?
- **Ideological Impact:** To what extent does the integration of Greek mythology allow Shelley to critique contemporary religious structures, effectively using "pagan" archetypes to champion a new, liberated human consciousness?

Literature Review

Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* is a combination of theological and eternal ideas to investigate a mystical idea beyond the Marxist universe. The poem carries the language and structure of idols which shaped sacred reflections. Shelley uses religious verses in the poem to portray the idea of ethereal power as one capable of individual presence merging life with "glory" and "Reality". To this extent the poem draws lines between Divine worship and the poet's regard for this Holy Spirit. Shelley is of the belief that the power of this unseen spirit will change humanity and make them feel free from the dark slavery of this world. Besides its hymnic language the poem does not elaborate any established faith as Shelley questioned Christianity reference to the beliefs like "Frail Spells". In this case Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* seen as a breakdown from traditional principles, offering a different form of spiritual enlightenment. The use of simile in the poem, explanations like to intellectual beauty to "moonbeams behind some piny mountain shower", "clouds in straight widely spread", and "mists o'er mountains driven". The use of such imagery mirrors the abstract nature of beauty Shelley represents (Alizadeh2, 2022).

Poetry and philosophy are interrelated for Shelley, which often seen as replaceable. Though critics have found difficulty in understanding the double nature of Shelley; both as a romantic poet and as a philosophical thinker, by deep desire for inner awareness. According to Lock, Language is not at all a medium for transferring knowledge, as said by Thomas Pine, Language can function as a tool of oppression, in this way the role of Shelley as a poet becomes doubtful. By analyzing *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, this contemporary essay investigates how philosophical ideas of Shelley not only seen in the poem but also state its aesthetic figure. This research article argued that the philosophical problem, how language is a powerful tool of knowledge with an aesthetic issue. In conclusion, the notion of philosophy and aesthetic vision in the poem solves the tension between the philosopher and the poet Shelley (Whickman, 2016).

P.B. Shelley as Romantic poet comes up with the reality check to classify human condition in a defining way. By analyzing “On the Sublime and Beautiful” by Edmund Burk as his major concern Shelley examines the classification of aestheticism which held the branch of enlightenment ideas away from each other. In this article, the researcher uses the concept of Rudolf Otto the numinous along with it the work of Frank Ankersmit an intellectual historian to acknowledge that Shelley represent a systematic account of experience beyond words (Lough, 2020).

The study investigates the stylistic techniques used by Shelley in “Ode to the West Wind” particularly, it examines the way Shelley uses these techniques to portray the poem’s central theme of destruction and preservation. This article revolves around the use of unusual diction, newness in grammar to visualize the activeness in the poem. The analysis shows that the use of techniques such as creative deviation and parallelism to showcase the poem main concern that is transformation. On the other hand, the visual structure of the poem encapsulates its emerging tone. This study concludes the understanding of Shelley’s creative craft spotlights the themes of degeneration and renewal, locating “Ode to the West Wind” as the best example of Romantic newness in structural and lingual form (Mariam Rasheed, 2025).

Ode to the West Wind by P.B. Shelley is a mouth piece of positivism. The poem addressing the belief of poet that good time will come and that suffering will be awarded as a victory. This hopefulness is stemmed in hope and a belief that true efforts will never be wasted. This research paper critically examined the poem through the concept of positivism. The crux of the poem lies in the following line: “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?” that idea symbolizing the poet’s situation of living in a landscape which is result of sufferings and decay, and now it is moving towards rebirth of the whole generation. This study will analyze the poet’s message of humanity in the poem as a main idea. According to this research *Ode to the West Wind* is an evidence of Critical Discourse Analysis, in sighted as a framework and base of analysis. The findings of the research paper serves as a powerful call of hope which is a pass through of destruction, particularly it is a reflection of social problems and hardships. Ultimately it summarizes the idea that hopelessness must be deleted and believing in faith is the natural order should be followed, believing that time and again an era of darkness is set by rebirth (Syeda Laila Saeed, 2023).

Symbolism is a figure of speech through which an author shows his emotions, is testament for reader’s to borrow themselves into it. By analyzing this paper with the lens of criticism the paper begins with the alignment of *Ode to a West Wind* with its imaginative and historical background. This paper then shows up a detailed analysis of how symbolism is used in the poem’s text (Wang, 2016).

Adnan (2022) in the article Female submissiveness in *The Kite Runner* by Khalid Hosseini talks about the psychological female submissiveness as it is quite relevant to the ancient myths of Afghani culture and tradition. Through the classical culture of Afghanistan Hosseini fuses it with modern American culture and tradition. As the plot of the novel is mythic and modern. On one side, it portrays the ancient and traditional pattern of Afghanistan on the other hand it shares the modernity in the light of American dream.

In another research article entitled as *Never Let Me Go: Nostalgia for real* (2021) by Adnan is about rooted and mythic character of Ishiguro. In this fiction, the character of Ishiguro is examined in the light of unbalanced sentimentality.

In another research studies published in 2016 by the researcher Bhaktawar Alishba and Muhammad Adnan known as *The Mythopoetic Studies of Mask by Euripides play Medea*. The research the functions of myths. This paper is truly insight how Greek myths functions in different masks. As it is reflecting the different ideas on the function of masks in Greek art and culture.

Maria, Adnan and Iram Khalil talk about the female suppression in two remarkable works *The Odyssey by Homer and The Odyssey* by Usman Ali. This paper is a transparent move as it shows how the modern writers are inspired by Greek myths and art as one of the Great romantic poet John Keats was inspired by Greek art and one can sense it as Hellenism in his poetry. The above mentioned article is a testimony how does mythology reshapes the writing of modern writers and writers like Usman Ali uses mythical insight in his remarkable drama *The Odyssey*.

The research paper also highlights, how the animal archetypes function in Pakistani folk tales. The contemporary research study is quite similar to the given stance as it is analyzing the archetypal function of animal in Pakistani folktales by the same token the researcher uses the frame work of Greek mythology to analyze the selected poems of Shelley.

Research Methods and Textual Analysis

The researcher is going to analyze the problem through the method of close reading of the selected poems of P.B. Shelley such as *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and *Ode to a West Wind* along with it investigating the importance of mythology in English Literature from the book *Greek and Roman Mythology* by Jessie M. Tatlock.

A mythological reading of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and *Ode to a West Wind* reflects how P.B. Shelley reshapes Greek myths to make an out coming spiritual look. Rather than rewriting traditional myths time and again. Shelley idealizes mystical ideas and present them as a divine for similar to Greek Gods. In this way his poetry rises as a type of myth-making in Romantic age in which ideals and nature renew mythical divinities.

In the poem *Ode to the West Wind*, the *West Wind* itself reflects the nature of Greek Gods, similar to God Zeus and Aeolus in showing its power over destruction and preservation. The explanation of wind given by Shelley as both “Preserver and Destroyer” mirrors the dual nature of Greek Gods. The poem’s addressing style is quite similar to old hymns, as the poet requests to the wind for transformation, highlighting to the poets who once called upon Muses (Greek and Roman poets). The concept of rebirth ends in the hope that spring follows winter sounds, Greek stories of rebirth and death. As narrated by the poet:

*O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being
Thus from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red, (n.d., p. 4)*

The opening section of the poem is highly rich in the sense of mythological examples. Shelley’s use of traditional references in the ode aims to present a divine force in to natural power. The direct quotation of *West Wind* in the poem as “O Wild West Wind” highlights the idea of divinity, recalling it in tone of mythos, creating a link between the poets of Roman and Greece in such a way they called upon muses and gods. Shelley sets his idea of “*breath of Autumn’s being*” that it is a life driving force which is quite similar to the mythic spirits like Aeolus the God of winds in Greek Mythology. Though, Aeolus is not named directly. The wind’s supreme command over nature shows his power. The symbolism of dead leaves “*like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing*” renounces the world of supernaturalism, portraying the old mythic notion of witchcraft. The similarity of leaves inculcates the idea of soul’s boundless in the hands of a powerful magician, uplifting the idea that the West Wind have god- like commands. Shelley’s putting down the idea of leaves as “*pestilence- stricken multitudes*” further mirrors mythic concept of divine punishment given by angry gods.

The imagery of the West Wind behaves like a coachman who bears “*winged seeds*” to their “*dark wintry bed*”. The direct comparison of the charioteer is a crystal clear example of mythical illusion, presenting gods like *Apollo* who drives the carriage of the sun, together with it the classical example of *Hades*, the god of underworld. The reference of the Azure sister as “*azure sister*” of the Spring represent the Spring as a hymnic reflection to the west wind, following a mythic family of such divine forces super-vising the natural cycle of the universe. The *clarion of spring* is another mythical image, joined with gods to announce re-birth or war, emphasizing the traditional and cultural tone. Finally, Shelley named, West Wind as “*Wild Spirit*” and to its opposite a “*Destroyer and a Preserver*” a double role of the wind mainly characterized to classical gods. Like Greco-Roman deities who strengthen both destruction and renewal, the west wind eliminates degeneration while preparing the universe for a new journey of life. Therefore, by the help of personification, mythological imagery and classical illusion, Shelley shapes the west wind into a symbol of divinity that has power over re-birth, death. This classical uplift authorizes Shelley not to praise cycle of nature but to empowering the faith for poetic, spiritual and political rebirth.

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty by Shelley represents the “*Spirit of Intellectual Beauty*” like an unseen, god like power in comparison to the classical concept of a Divine being and ideal form. The poem’s hymnic structure and prayer-like language suggest traditional worship, but Percy Bysshe Shelley reimagines it by substituting classical gods with an idealized concept of truth and beauty. This life force makes human beings as mortals and gratifying the moral and spiritual role once gained by Classical myths. As said by P.B. Shelley:

*The awful shadow of some unseen power
Floats through unseen among us; visiting
This various world with an inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,
Like clouds in straight widely spread,
Like memory of music fled,
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery* (Hymn to Intellectual Beauty)

The opening stanza of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* presents Shelley’s core idea through partial use of god like imagery. The “*awful shadow of some unseen power*” refers to a symbolic, mystical energy instead of a god. In traditional mythology, the sacred spirits like the Daemon, Plato’s idea of Beauty, and natural spirits are often unseen rather than prominently discussed. Shelley reshapes this culture to visualize *Intellectual Beauty* as a source of mythical influence- an unseen power that reshapes human way of thinking without appear itself directly. The stanza time and again highlights the temporariness of inner beauty, a common feature of mythical divine spirits who shows up for a short period of time and then go back to Oracle.

The power visits the world irregularly, much like Olympian gods who steps in lives of human for a short duration. Shelley’s similes- *summer winds*, *moonbeams*, *evening hues*, *fading music*- repeatedly symbolizing classical symbols linked with the arrival of Greek Gods for a short time. These type of forces are similar to old myths where gods display themselves through nature in place of closeness.

Ultimately, Shelley's view about the spiritual power as "dearer for its mystery" mirrors the reformation of mythology in Romantic era. Shelley's advanced myth cut out the idea in a way traditional myths gave clarity and identity. The notion of Intellectual Beauty plays a very important role in replacing the religious mythology, viewing spirituality over a theological doctrine. Therefore, the stanza is a new framework in mythic tradition in which spiritual beauty eliminates the presence of Gods as temporary figure but presenting it as a holy force which briefly lighten up the human heart. It stayed with humans like a shadow made by sun that disappears when the sunlight fades out. The spirit of beauty brings essence in human life in a way when poet asks spiritual beauty to stay with him for the rest of his life and he promised the intellectual beauty to serve her throughout his life teaches humanity ethic and morals.

Conclusion

The selected poems of P.B. Shelley *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and *Ode to the West Wind* are a mouth piece of having a great influence of Greek and Roman mythology on English Literature. It plays a very crucial role in shaping the English Literature structurally and philosophically. Shelley does not rewrite or retell the mythic art but he uses mythology in his above mentioned poems as a building block of spirituality and authority. Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* stayed in the blanket of Intellectual Beauty which visits mankind for a short period of time and guided them like a divine power. On the other hand, In *Ode to a West Wind*, Shelley called the West wind as Wild West Wind which means it carries power and the reference to God Zeus, Apollo, Hades and others symbolizing the idea that he uses mythic illusions in the poem. He also makes the west wind as a source of rebirth and death which also highlights God like powers as destructor and preserver. By analyzing both poems through the perspective of influence of mythology on English Literature this research is of the view that mythology has a great impact on English Literature as well as English Writers. In a nut shell the use of hymnic language in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and the idea of rebirth after death in *Ode to the West Wind* encapsulate the notion of Greek Mythology in Shelley's poetic work.

References

- Adnan, M., Farhad, A., Akhtar, H. S., & Khalil, I. (2022). Female submissiveness in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. *Competitive Social Sciences Research Journal*, 3(1), 577–581.
- Adnan, M., Zahra, R., Akhtar, H. S., & Ahmad, S. (2021). *Never Let Me Go*: Nostalgia for the real. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 4(4), 215–220.
- Alishba, B., & Adnan, M. (2016). The mythopoetic study of mask in Euripides's play *Medea*: A sign of plurality. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 4(12), 28–34. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.0412006>
- Alizadeh, M. F. (2022). Spiritual Shelley: A study of the ideological sublime in Percy B. Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*, 169–180.
- Chandrakar, F., & Gupta, D. (2018). The influence of mythology on modern English literature. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 381.
- Farhad, A., Adnan, M., & Akhtar, H. S. (2021). Feminism and psychoanalysis in A. J. Finn's *The Woman in the Window*. *Harf-o-Sukhan*, 5(4), 578–584.
- Lough, C. T. (2020, October 9). *Synthesizing the sublime and beautiful: Aesthetics in Shelley's poetry*. The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1952&context=student_scholarship

- McCollum, C. (2012). Mirrors: Shakespeare's use of mythology in *Hamlet*. *The Woodend Quarterly*, 114–119.
- Musarrat, M., Adnan, M., & Khalil, I. (2017). A socio-cultural study of *The Odyssey* by Homer and *The Odyssey* by Usman Ali: A comparative analysis. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 5(1), 13–22.
- Poetry Foundation. (n.d.). *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. Retrieved January 6, 2026, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org>
- Qureshi, T., Adnan, M., & Zaheer, S. (2024). Spatial inactivity and existential catastrophe: A comparative analysis of *Waiting for Godot* and *The Last Metaphor*. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 3(3), 2203–2213.
- Rasheed, M., & Hussain, M. H. (2025). Foregrounding of the theme of change and renewal in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*: A stylistics analysis. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 1701–1710.
- Saeed, S. L., & Iqbal, S. (2023). The positive thinking in Shelley's poem *Ode to the West Wind*: A critical discourse analysis. *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economic Review*, 218–223.
- Salma, U. E., Nazir, B., Gujjar, M. A., & Qureshi, T. (2026). Animal archetypes in Pakistani folk tales. *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*, 4(1), 1347–1361.
- Saylor Academy. (n.d.). *Ode to the West Wind*. Retrieved January 6, 2026, from <https://resources.saylor.org>
- Scribd. (n.d.). *The use of supernatural machinery in The Rape of the Lock*. Retrieved April 27, 2026, from <https://www.scribd.com/document/738009982/THE-USE-OF-SUPERNATURAL-MACHINERY-IN-THE-RAPE-OF-LOCK>
- Tariq, I., Adnan, M., & Tariq, T. (2026). Poetics of absurdity and existentialism: A comparative study of *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Last Metaphor*. *Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies*, 4(1), 557–582.
- The California Learning Resource Network. (2025, February 12). *What is mythology in literature?* Retrieved April 27, 2026, from <https://www.clrn.org/what-is-mythology-in-literature/>
- Wang, J. (2016). An interpretation on the symbolism in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. In *Proceedings of the 2016 4th International Education, Economics, Social Science, Arts, Sports and Management Engineering Conference (IEESASM 2016)* (pp. 1205–1208).
- Whickman, P. (2016). The poet as sage, sage as poet in 1816: Aesthetics and epistemology in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 30(2), 142–154.
- Zaheer, S., Adnan, M., Qureshi, T., Khalil, I., & Iqbal, M. (2024). Identity crises and the impact of 9/11: A postcolonial study of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Khuda Kay Liye*. *Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 5(3), 150–167.