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P. B. Shelley (1792 - 1822)

"make me thy lyre, even
as the forest is

what if my leaves are
falling like its own!

The tumult of thy mighty
harmonies

will take from both
a deep, autumnal tone

Sweet though in sadness

Be thou, spirit fierce

my spirit! Be thou me

impetuous one!

In this fragment from the
"Ode to the West Wind" we
have a suggestion of Shelley's
own spirit, as reflected
in all his poetry. The very
spirit of nature, which appears
to us in the wind and
the cloud, the sunset and
the moonrise, seems to have
possessed him, at times,
and made him a chosen in-
strument of melody. At such
times he is a true poet, and
his work is unrivaled. At
other times, unfortunately,

Shelley joins with Byron in voicing a vain rebellion against society. His poetry, like his life, divides itself into two distinct moods. In one he is the violent reformer, seeking to overthrow our present institutions and to hurry the millennium out of its slow walk into a gallop. Out of this mood come most of his longer poems, like 'Queen Mab', 'The Revolt of Islam', 'Hellas' and 'The Witch of Atlas', which are somewhat violent diatribes against government, priests, marriage, religion, even God as man supposed him to be. In a different mood, which finds expression in 'Alastor', 'Adonais', and his wonderful lyrics, Shelley is like a wanderer following a vague, beautiful vision, forever sad and forever unsatisfied. In the latter mood he appeals

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profoundly to all men who
have known what it is to
follow after an unattainable
ideal.

The end.

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