



THE CYCLE OF SEASONS: AN ANALYSIS OF LOUISE GLÜCK'S SELECTED POEMS

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Abstract

The world we live in today has become fast-paced, complex, and uncertain with unprecedented environmental, social, and cultural events. This escalating complexity necessitates an alternative way to study and intervene in our world. Nowadays, it is seen that ecological degradation is going on in each and every part of the world. This essay discusses the idea of "Seasons" to reflect upon environmental concerns of the 21st century. It intends to focus on seasons like summer, winter, spring, and autumn to enhance readers' awareness of their physical surroundings through an analysis of Louise Glück's selected poems. The essay will examine Glück's use of the seasons along with landscape imagery, such as gardens, plants, fruits, flowers, animals, etc. to focus on how literature and the natural world collaborate and how humans interact with their surroundings. It includes attempts to theorize the representation by emphasizing relationality in human-environmental interactions. Further, it will highlight the way Glück uses season as a metaphor to see people and their changing lives.

Keywords: Louise Glück, Seasons, American Poetry, Ecocriticism, Ecopoetry.

Introduction

The weather is the basic sign of the inextricability of culture and nature. Weather changes in each season and the seasons follow the same pattern every year. Climate, weather, and the change of seasons influence much of our everyday engagements. Weather can be both an accommodating and destructive force for people and their property. The change of seasons provides different types of work, food, celebrations, and recreation. Plants and animals also change their ways with the seasons; they go through the process of change as if their patterns and behaviors are based on the cycle of seasons. According to scientists, organisms instinctively detect variations in the sun's light cycle and adapt their behavior as a result. Plants can be more particular about just the right conditions to grow flowers or produce seeds,

as the seasons, temperatures, and moisture conditions also play an enormous role in governing their cycles. Within the last decade, the investigation of phenology has taken on a new legitimacy in the area of climate change research. Developing literature reveals that a change in the timing of natural events occurs in a wide range of locations and affects a wide range of species.

The seasons of summer, winter, day, and night are all natural occurrences and we have no control over how the natural system works. In many cultures, spring is a time of rebirth, growth, joy, pregnancy, and fertility. The summer is a period of joy, liberation, and love, a metaphor for growing up. Autumn is a metaphor for the phases of life, including growth, maturation, loss, decay, and change. All of these concepts—death, loss, suffering, and adversity—are metaphors for winter. Seasonal

changes have always been used as a metaphor for complex and insightful concepts in literature. Glück uses seasons as a metaphor, a symbol, a motif, and, overall, a literary device in her poems to reveal the nuances and complexities of nature-human interactions.

Review of Literature:

Louise Glück's *Poems: 1962-2012* (2013), serves as a reminder that in addition to being a creative and versatile poet, Glück was also incredibly bold. The collection of works as a whole conveys an astonishing abundance of creativity and life rather than one of limitation. She has significantly increased her vocabulary and breadth while certainly staying within the parameters of her own personality. The repulsion and affirmation, sensual immediacy, and thoughtfulness, in Glück's poems, alternate. As if full comprehension were a chimera and a barrier to true understanding, she enters and exits with an unrelenting devotion to clarity and a careful eye out for even the slightest imprecision. Her poems capture not only the wrath against the order but also the rage against trying to find a "truth" that no system can fully or even vaguely approach. Broadly, she has engaged with the themes of myth, nature, suffering, loss, failed relationships, death, loneliness, healing, etc. in her poems.

Season features in a major way in Louise Glück's eleventh book of poetry, *A Village Life* (2009). It is set in the topography of a village in a vague Mediterranean setting. At the fountain, the village's roadways come together, the fountain rises in the middle of the plaza. Geologic time is superimposed on human time, all of which can be seen at once and without experiencing an excessive sense of speed. Despite having a novelistic writing style, the collection shows that Glück focuses more on pauses and intervals, moments of suspension (rather than tension), in a dreamlike present moment that encourages poetic inquiry and reflection. The book makes references to a way of life that is disintegrating. The characters in the poems are frequently seen by themselves and other characters not so much as individuals, but rather as representatives of a process, of the waves of various generations that flow through and across the

community. *A Village Life* is a natural, ongoing exchange between optimism and delight, which is closely related to the changing season and changing lives.

To study the representation of nature in poetry, the book *Ecocriticism* (2004) by Greg Garrard offers invaluable insights. It examines how we imagine and represent the interplay between people and the environment in many forms of cultural expression, from Wordsworth and Thoreau to Disney and BBC nature programs. Many ecological movements serve as an inspiration for it. Greg Garrard, an interesting author, investigates the ideas that have caught the attention of ecocritics while discussing the evolution of the movement. The book tackles a variety of subjects, including pollution, the wilderness, the Earth, different seasons, living things, and the end of the planet. This is the first student-friendly overview of one of the newest and most fascinating areas of literary and cultural studies, and it offers suggestions for further reading as well as a useful dictionary of terms.

In "The Idea of Nature" (2000), Kate Soper argues that if nature is conceptualized and valued as something that is separate from human culture, as it is sometimes done in environmental philosophy, then relatively little of the environment corresponds to the concept: hardly anything we refer to as natural landscape is natural in this sense, and its presumed value may thus be seen as being expressed in question. She cites Cicero, who made a distinction between a non-human nature that is inherited and one that is produced through human effort. He finished his analysis of the shapes that the latter took by stating that, in a sense, we try to build a second nature in the natural world with human hands. It is accurate to refer to nature as a cultural creation in some significant ways given the extent of human impact on the environment in our day. The examination of Glück's poems will primarily draw on Soper's theoretical contribution to the discussion of the cultural construction of nature, which is highly relevant.

Portrayal of Seasons in American Poetry:

Seasons have a symbolic meaning that can help readers better understand individuals and

themes. Seasons have been utilized as symbols so frequently over time that they now individually have embedded meanings. Every good poetry needs a setting, or the time and place where the story takes place. In literary works, the setting serves as both the front and core of the poem. The tone of the poem, the character's attitudes, and the way the issues are presented are all influenced by the setting of a particular story in the poem. The symbolism of the seasons is highlighted in this essay. Many authors of literary works have employed seasonal imagery to help readers better understand themes and characters. Each season has embedded meanings and connotations as a result of the season's frequent and constant use throughout literary history. In "After Apple Picking," by Robert Frost, the speaker is worn out from harvesting a huge crop. This is intrinsically autumnal: as we enjoy the fruits of our labour, we also consider the energy we expended and the passing of time. Walt Whitman utilizes the springtime blooming of lilacs as a metaphor for optimism and regeneration following the death of President Abraham Lincoln in his poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." Mary Oliver's poem "August" uses the season as a metaphor of the beauty and wealth of the natural world to celebrate the straightforward joys of summer, such as swimming in a pond and collecting berries. The complicated emotions felt during trying times are metaphorically represented by rain in Langston Hughes' poetry "April Rain Song," providing a feeling of release and emotional healing. Sylvia Plath's poem "Winter Trees" explores the stark beauty of wintertime trees as a metaphor for life's vulnerability and resiliency.

American poets have also studied the times between seasons as they change, highlighting the liminal areas when one season transitions into another. This liminality is frequently used as a metaphor for maturation, change, and time itself. These transitions are discussed in poems like "Spring and Fall" by Gerard Manley Hopkins and "The Summer Day" by Mary Oliver, which encourage readers to think about their own lives. Thus, the seasons have been a common motif in American poetry, serving as a setting for investigating different feelings, analogies, and considerations. Poets have

drawn inspiration from the cyclical rhythm of the seasons and their symbolic relevance in human lives, from the waking of spring to the contemplation of winter.

Portrayal of Seasons in Glück's Poetry:

For Glück, there is a direct correlation between the self's bond with its environment and the bonds between people who make up society. She draws on her cultural roots and upbringing to describe the scene of waiting for the harvest in many of her poems. On a continent where food is scarce, this gathering season becomes even more fragile and essential. Her poem details the seasons, and the importance of rains signifying the crops are ready to be garnered. The tone and the author's attitude towards what she is writing is respectful and reverent. The language of "Season" is easy to understand and picturesque. Glück uses words that paint a picture. Words including "summer", "rain", "wind", and "twilight" etc. create dynamic movement in the poem. These words evoke the "visual world" that she talks about. The reader can picture this scene. Glück speaks about the bond between self and environment. She traces a path from culture to nature. In order to survive our species need all types of weather. When Glück talks about spring, she means that spring is full of feelings. It is obvious that after the winter visit, the spring is awakened, and nature is rejuvenated. In this sense, the opening of the flowerpot, birds emerging, clear sky, and the shining stars is a sign of spring. She describes about winter melting and the retreat of cold. In other words, she is happy about the beautiful spring doors that have been opened. It is worth noting that the sound of the birds will delight the human heart in the spring. In the poetry of Glück, the idea of Nature was held and transformed and is vividly portraying human survival through the portrayal of the seasons. Her poems are distinguished by the breadth of philosophical thinking, and the variety and vitality of images.

The season's metaphorical meaning in literature is well established and it is also celebrated in lovely poems. It is well known that people are happy when spring arrives after winter. However, this season brings a window of opportunity. It might

be meeting new people, new love, or an opportunity to start your own venture. Spring is the season of new life in nature. The trees grow lush new leaves and blossom, and flowers begin to bloom, the fields are full of beautiful, coloured flowers, their beauty makes us all happy. A reading of Glück's "In the Plaza" tells that the purpose of the spring is to see the beautiful nature, the flowers, and the trees in it, and here in this poem, the lover wants to get recognized by the girl who might be her beloved through a bouquet of flowers. The spring reflects the embodiment of the imagination. In spring the sky is clear. This perception of nature is further illustrated through poetry. The state of dispersion in the human being is transferred to the images of nature like "a bouquet of flowers" in this poem. As we can see, Glück's lines are also strings of great love for nature. The poet's interpretations, diagnoses, and definitions serve as an effective means of expressing the harmony of nature and the lyric character. The poem "In the Plaza" from *A Village Life* is as follows:

For two weeks he's been watching the same girl, someone he sees in the plaza. In her twenties maybe, drinking coffee in the afternoon, the little dark head bent over a magazine.

He watches from across the square, pretending to be buying something, cigarettes, maybe a bouquet of flowers... (Glück, 572)

Glück interprets the summer season as a period of human life, a period of hard work. The poetic description of summer season continues in the works of many artists. At the same time, of course, there are changes in both form and content in accordance with the artistic thinking of the artist. The summer theme has a special place in the poetry of Glück. According to her, Season is not a song about summer or winter. Perhaps it is literary art - a way of depicting certain types of life, and events through symbolic images. In fact, in the literature of the ancient people, there is a unique tradition of depicting good as summer and evil as winter. She tells summer and winter are not only the names of the seasons, but also a generalized image representing the qualities of crops, leaves, fields, fruits, trees, and so on. Summer and winter are one

of the figurative images in her poetry. Glück's poem "Abundance" from *A Village Life* describes the thoughts of the summer season. The main focus of the poem is on the image of the wheat, leaves, and peach trees. The poet emphasizes that summer is a time of abundance, "nobody dies, nobody goes hungry." This season gives small animals fruits and grain in abundance. It's a time of happiness, it gives the image of "fruit ripening", "rows of wheat", "full moon," etc. In the poem, the leaves of the peach trees rustle in the night ahead which makes the poet feel happy to be alive. In this sense, in poetry, this image is a symbol of the desire for freedom. According to the poet, this is the original colour of summer "the meaning of life". The poem begins as follows:

A cool wind blows on summer evenings, stirring the wheat. The wheat bends, the leaves of the peach trees rustle in the night ahead...Slowly the fruit ripens...Fruit and grain: a time of abundance... (Glück, 620)

In the poetry of Glück, we can discover the truths about our own sympathetic nature by studying nature as a principle of creation, of which the creative mind is a component. In particular, in the lines of the summer season, the joys and sorrows of humans are reflected in the harmony of nature. The hardest and most difficult work in the world is to find a natural expression of thoughts, feelings, and concepts, to materialize the thousands of moods, states, and feelings that exist in the human brain. The more difficult it is to turn one's senses into words, the harder it is to visualize the spiritual life. Indeed, in the poems of Glück, the images of nature are beautiful and impressive, in harmony with the events of the seasons. The summer is a time of joy to the hearts of the people as there is plantation in the fields and spreading flowers which gives an unparalleled beauty. The poet describes the season as "summer", "field of grasses", "good weather", "river", and "rain". High-quality combinations such as youthful, fun, cheerful, and juggling are reflected in the poems. The vitality of these lines is that they reflect a beautiful and vibrant summer landscape. The charm of the good weather in the poem reaches its climax. This cheerful mood is described in the

following stanza, in the poem "Walking at Night" from *A Village Life*:

She's like a dry blade of grass in a field of grasses. When she's tired of the streets, in good weather she walks in the fields where the town ends. Sometimes, in summer, she goes as far as the river. (Glück 584)

A reading of Glück's "Vespers" in the age of global warming, must begin with the knowledge that we have no choice but to live with the weather. Through her poetry, she says to make connections between human life and the seasons, and between the seasons themselves. After all, the poet refers to the seasons of nature, describing the pain of the times, the sad moods of her contemporaries, and sometimes the passionate feelings. Therefore, in the poem "The Letters", from the anthology *The House on Marshland* Glück writes: "watching the dry leaves drift over the village". Here, the "dry leaves" represents fall or autumn as dry leaf is a symbol of autumn. The poet places the social image on this image of nature. In other words, the pain, the defeat, the quiet night is like a dry leaf in the small garden. In the autumn portrayal, the poet expresses the image of the Earth's bareness and imposes a social context on it. Glück's symbol for the accommodating situation is commonly not a scene but a monolithic figure in an empty landscape. In her poetry, certain stanzas depict very typical scenes of autumn. It gives some of the most vivid pictures in poetry. Glück's pictorial quality is really at its zenith in these poems. In the last verses, the poet's conclusions are expressed in a manner consistent with the realities of life. Every season of life is fleeting, in the poem "Burning Leaves" from *A Village Life* we see the poet says "no one knows whether they represent life or death."

There's a pile of stones around it.
Past the stones, the earth's raked clean, bare
Finally the leaves are gone, the fuel's gone,
the last flames burn upwards and sideways...
though no one knows whether they
represent life or death. (Glück, 591)

Glück is known as a poet of beauty as well. For her, the principle of beauty has a spiritual existence. She sees and visualizes beauty through all her senses.

Another feature of her poetry is sensuousness. She takes sensuous delight in all focus of beauty. Her poetry is replete with sweet visual images. She can also be called Hellenist, as she loves Greek Culture and Literature, and she continues to spread Greek culture through her poetry. The poem "Harvest" from *A Village Life* has tightly woven stanzas that tell about autumn and its activities. The stanzas tell about the beauty and bounty of the autumn season with lots of seasonal vegetables and fruits like "tomatoes", "pumpkins", "gourds", "dried chilies", "braids of garlic", "vines", "peas", "lavender" and so on. Then the poet says that the gourds are rotting on the ground due to heavy rain, and the sweet blue grapes are finished. There is a complete and perfect picture of the autumn season in this poem. In the same poem, the poet talks about the images of the winter season – "the frost comes; there's no more question of harvest." Poet's winter poems contain traditional poetic images and innovative characters. In this poem, she says "the snow begins; the pretense of life ends." This could be a new interpretation of this poem. The poet does not stop there. She compares the snow to the "earth" and "moon". The line says: "The earth is white now; the fields shine when the moon rises."

The gourds are rotting on the ground, the sweet blue grapes are finished...And then the frost comes; there's no more question of harvest. The snow begins; the pretense of life ends. The earth is white now; the fields shine when the moon rises. (Glück, 598)

Glück reminds herself and the readers about the autumn season's many wonders, she uses the phrase "the abundance of the harvest," which she knows is frequently overlooked in the list of seasons. The scattering of seeds that would grow into flowers the next year, and the symphony of sights and sounds at dusk. The poem "Figs" in *A Village Life* contains very specific natural landscapes and images. The second stanza in the poem offers images of seasons like "wild mushrooms", "rain", "wine", "grass", "garden", "stars" etc. This stanza moves outside of the human perspective to include things that are not under human control. Another section captures some of the 'wildness' which is unpredictability on top of form. It's a coincidence

that the poem "Figs" in *A Village Life* mentions autumn and summer, but not winter. Glück doesn't want to dwell on the cold days to come. In many of her poetry, the days are getting shorter and chillier as we approach autumn in order to really appreciate it. Like the personification of autumn, who doesn't seem to care about the outside world, the poet maintains a focus on the present moment throughout the majority of her poem. However, the poem moves forward in subtle ways. The other stanza describes the natural world at its height of ripeness and sunlight. Here, the sun is getting merciless and we can feel the world aging. Strangely, the autumn season itself does not need to be praised or appreciated by anyone.

In autumn, sometimes filled with wild mushrooms, There wasn't always time for that and the weather had to be right, just after the rain...He minds summer most- the sun gets to him, Here it's merciless, you can feel the world aging... (Glück, 604)

Louise Glück's poem "October" from *Averno* explores how the natural world changes in the month of October. The soil takes on a new shape throughout the autumn season. It changes back into her original self while donning the robe of fresh leaves. The poet emphasizes the seasonal transformation at the start of fall. Her voice seems perplexed as she observes. She is unable to distinguish between a shift and a dream. She asks herself numerous questions and provides responses. The poem takes on a new appearance as a result of this cause-and-effect chain. Even though she is discussing a common theme in "October", her ideas are original. Louise Glück's poem "October" addresses both the seasonal transition that occurs in October and the poet's own feelings about it. In the poem, the poet imagines that winter has returned. She glances around to confirm the seasonal change and then begins to doubt herself. She talks about the natural shift while also recounting the difficult times in her history. After the icy grasp of winter, nature rejuvenates herself in the autumn. She observes the change in herself as well as in nature. In this poem, the poet is particularly drawn to the vines in the backyard garden. Without any assistance, the vine managed to scale the "south wall." The poet alludes

to herself as the vine in her comparison. She appears to have developed her strength independently, much like the vine.

I remember how the earth felt, red and dense,
In stiff rows, weren't the seeds planted,
don't vines climb the south wall... (Glück, 493)

In "Snowdrops", from *The Wild Iris* Glück uses the metaphor of winter to convey the idea of a condition of emotional pain that becomes almost physically palpable and takes up residence in our bodies. The feeling of pain is ice-cold. It makes the inner life more rigid. And dread stops the river of life that gives us energy, making us feel as though we may as well be dead. There are times in our life when everything seems lost, intolerable, incurable, or irreparable—we feel as though we've messed up this situation or that situation has messed us up. The sense of being buried and "not expecting to survive" is revealed by Glück. Dead. "Not expecting to wake up again." However, like the iris, crocus, or snowdrops, even the coldest soul has this tenacity that feels that what is hidden can push through the ice and snow and even taste the "cold light of earliest spring." Even in the midst of Holy Saturday's protracted anticipation and Good Friday's agony, she emphasizes Easter. No one summons joy. From hopelessness to promise, the frozen snow of being is gradually thawing into the spring bloom.

I did not expect to survive, earth suppressing me.

I didn't expect to waken again, to feel in damp earth my body able to respond again,
Remembering after so long how to open again in the cold light of earliest spring... (Glück, 250)

Conclusion:

Louise Glück's poems present the process of the changes in nature by building new cognitive frames. In the discussed poems, the poet alludes to the belief that all the elements of nature are equally significant for the ecological balance. Glück's concern to show humans are intimately associated with nature, and that the destruction of nature has severe consequences at present are reflected in these poems. Here, she portrays a biocentric worldview undercutting a human-centered attitude.

She points out disorder in ecological conditions because of humans' recklessness. Among the immense variations of her themes, an important concern in Glück's poetry is ecological warning. She seems to say that human beings should adopt proper measures in such changing scenarios of nature, otherwise, they have to encounter many disasters. Therefore, Glück appeals human beings to be responsible to maintain balance in the ecosystem by conserving the environment.

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