

Spring And All By Williams

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Introduction

“Spring and All” by Williams is an image of the spring season in the eyes of the poet. (Williams, 2011) Many people believe this season to be a time when the weather is warmer and a new life is born, but the poet sees the spring season as changes that take place slowly and gradually. It is not a prompt disclosure of these changes to its lovely state. Thus, the poem discovers the gradual and slow emergence of the notion of spring from what seems to be the illness of the winter season. He takes the readers from the landscape of winter to the spring’s visual images. The spring season awakens nature as well as the souls.

Explanation

The poem starts with a diseased hospital in order to set the scene for the picture of incongruous humanity to compare with the beauty of nature that comes during the spring season. The poet says (lines 1 and 2),

“By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue.”

Here, the poet describes his environment to give the readers an image of what he’s observing. The term “contagious” is used to set up the mood of the poem. Thus, the poet uses the first stanza to describe the whole surroundings, persuading the readers to imagine the landscape where he is. In the following stanza, the poet further describes the landscape and indicates the deadness of the present season. We can observe it in lines (11-13),

“And small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines”

He uses the words lifeless, dead, and brown to give the readers a picture of the poet’s surroundings before the season of spring comes into play. This gives a source of comparison and contrast for the coming images and plants. Then, we observe the shift of tone in the following stanza, where the poet starts demonstrating the notion of a new birth using natural objects (lines 14 and 15),

“Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches”

He uses the words “sluggish” and “dazed” to describe the slow, gradual, and confused approaching of the spring season. The poet describes the appearance of the spring and refers to it as lifeless, just like a newborn baby seems lifeless in appearance. In the following stanza, the poet describes more characteristics of the season, which are similar to those of a newborn baby (lines 16-19).

“They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind”

The poet says that the babies come naked and cold in this world, uncertain and unaware of their surroundings and environment. Similar is the case with the spring season, which is approaching, unaware of the conditions before it approached, which only consisted of the cold and familiar wind. The message being conveyed is of the natural rebirth and also the soul’s awakening. The poem demonstrates ideas and concepts of the new start and beginning and reaffirmation of one’s path. There’s also the usage of clichés and irony in the poem, which challenges the ordinary and usual ideas carried out in many different versions of poetry. Williams, considered an imagist poet, focuses more on the imagination and ideas being conveyed rather than the style in which the poem is being written. Starting a spring poem with the mention of the hospital is an ironic concept since the idea of the hospital does not match or is completely opposite to the idea and beauty of the spring season. A normal person could never associate a hospital to the spring. Also, he makes fun of the darker parts of nature “such as reddish, purplish, forked, upstanding, and Twiggy.”

The poem can be seen as a ray of hope for people to restart or renew their lives and reevaluate their choices, just as “a new flower breaking free from the frozen ground of winter and restarting its life” (sophiewiner.com). The depiction of the cyclical rebirth of life is clear in the awareness and awakening of the plants linked to intellectuality and humanity. The poet gave a skillful touch to the changing images from the season of winter to spring. Approaching the end of the poem, the poet asserts that all the changes will take place at their own speed and pace. And once all objects define themselves, the beauty of spring is clear, obvious, and able to be appreciated and celebrated (lines 22 and 23).

“One by one, objects are defined—
it quickens clarity, outline of leaf.”

The poet’s pared-down style is obvious in his understated and typical ending (lines 24-27).

“But now the stark dignity of entrance-Still, the profound change
has come upon them: rooted they
grip down and begin to awaken”

Conclusion

Through the poem, we can imagine how deep the poet’s connection with nature is as he provides a beautiful and thorough description of the departure of winter and the arrival of spring, which comes along with its beauty. The readers of the poem are given an opportunity to think in a different way regarding the spring season, its emergence, and the changes it brings along with it. Moreover, the awakenings of the soul are as necessary as the spring’s arrival. Just as the spring awakens the flowers and plants, it also awakens our souls and hopes, giving us new life. The title of the poem “Spring and All” depicts the same idea. (“Spring and All Analysis”, 2014)

References

A New Meaning of Spring in William Williams’s “Spring and All”. (n.d.). Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <https://blogs.cofc.edu/modernism/2014/02/20/a-new-meaning-of-spring-in-william-williamss-spring-and-all/>

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