Chapter One

Introduction

William Butler Yeats was born on 13 June 1865 at Sligo in Sandy Mount, Ireland as the first child of John Butler Yeats and Susan Mary Pollex Fen. His father was a successful barrister at that time, while his mother stayed at home to look after the new born baby. Susan Pollex Fen came from a wealthy Anglo Irish family who owned a prosperous milling and shipping business in County Sligo. Thus, his early childhood was spent in the midst of the rich and plentiful flora and fauna of the County of Sligo. Yeats’s own quiet shy temperament seemed to correspond to the peaceful, kind and generous surroundings where nature was endowed with all the tendencies and soothing pleasures of an uncontaminated existence.

During 1868 the Yeats’s shifted to London and remained there for seven years. Although many more such trips were made to London, but Yeats never lost touch with Sligo. The children thought of Sligo as their home, rather than London. The holiday in Sligo were filled with boating, fishing and exploring the lush green woods. Yeats would explore the hills of Howth with a green net slung across his shoulder. He had a Wordsworthian interest in the luxuriant manifestations of nature and very often, took pleasure in discovering flowers and insects and could spend whole day in the hill paths and glades without the glimpse of a human face. It was that his soul was fashioned.

There peasant and squire alike live in an old world, rich in folk-lore and folk song. The boy’s imagination entered fairy land, and he was bewitched for life into a longing for magic. From the very soil of ancient Fire he drank the dream of the noble and the beggar man and forever after the modern world seemed to him vulgar, and not real in any essential way. (Collins 14)
These close contacts with nature had a formative influence on young Yeats’s mind. Nature was full of adventure and mystery for Yeats and it supplied the images and symbols of his earliest poems. While for Wordsworth, Nature was a teacher and companion that brought comforting effects, Nature to Yeats was the threshold of primitive folk-lore and the stronghold of fairies and supernatural beings. Getting away from the rich, imaginative and even wild world of nature and being confined to the restricting and rigorous discipline of school life must have proved to be a shock and an unnatural change to Yeats’s gentle and impressionable mind. His love for the world of nature and the world of fairies menaced by the pull of reality of every day existence must have made him very unhappy indeed. (Yeats, Autobiographies5-6)

His formal education began under his aunts, who because of his engrossment in his own thoughts, had supposed that he has been lacking in intelligence. But the truth was that he was not deficient in intelligence which his aunts had observed in him, because of his withdrawal from the world of reality. In fact, his mind had an obsessive preoccupation with the world of fantasy and dreams which, of necessity, required of him to be a recluse and a lover of solitude. This dream world was connected with the folk-lore with which the woods and glens were associated. It was on account of his preoccupation with dreams that Yeats did not have a pleasant experience of his school life. His gentle disposition as a dreamer did not find a congenial environment in school. In Sligo, he went to Dame school where he felt that he did not have much to gain.

Later on, when the family moved to London Yeats was admitted to a Day school, Godolphin Hammersmith. His experience in this school was more disappointing than the one in Sligo. At Sligo at least he had the satisfaction of being in contact with nature. Yeats, being gentle in disposition had to face a lot of
harassment from his peers. He finally befriended one of the finest athletes of the school, Cyril Vesey. Besides, being his friend and protector, Cyril Vesey also, shared Yeats’s love for the living world of nature, the woods, and the insects. Perhaps the interests that the two pursued compensated in some way for the constricting and suffocating effect the school discipline had on Yeats’ young mind.

In 1881, Yeats joined the High School at Harcourt Street. Here, unlike the Godolphin there was no harassment and Yeats could at last have the time and leisure he had wanted up to this time we find that Yeats’s only obsession was with Entomology and he was not particularly bright in literature. He finished school in 1883 and regretted that his father had sent him there. He attributed his being poor in literature (Greek and Latin) to his not having much time for it. He believed that, had his father kept him at home and tutored him in Greek and Latin, he would not have to approach the classics through poor translations. His father, in pursuance of his belief that a little training in Art is a must for every young man, put Yeats to attend classes at Metropolitan school of Art in Kildare street London. But it proved to be a dissatisfying experience for Yeats, for he realized that his real interest was not in Art but in the classics and poetry.

The dreamy atmosphere of Yeats early poems and the passionate intensity of the later poems owe much to the influences of his early life. Among his earliest influences the most significant was that of his Grandfather, William Pollex Fen. Yeats’s response to his grandfather was that of adoration mixed with awe. He looked up to him as a God and always nourished in his mind, paradoxically a feeling of distance as well as nearness. At a later stage in his life Yeats has recalled his grandfather’s image like this: “He had a violent temper and kept a hatchet at his
bedside for burglars and would knock a man down instead of going to the law.”
(Yeats, Autobiographies 7)

Yeats’s delight in passionate men manifested in his poems and plays must have had its origin in the memory of his grandfather. The domineering personality of William Pollexfen and his extraordinary reticence combined with the intensity of living naturally affected the young Yeats’s mind. His grandfather’s influence on his mind was primarily emotional; his father John Yeats’s influence was intellectual and progressive. Yeats inherited his attitude towards personality largely from his father. Both father and son believed that personality was not merely the individual’s complex of distinct external characteristics and mannerisms but a mass of instincts, appetites, longings and intuitions, resting on the firm basis of five senses.

Like his father, Yeats believed that emotion and intellect had a creative purpose rather than a dead appendage to man. Servile devotion to an abstract intellectual principle would destroy the human soul just as effectively as servile religious adherence destroys the mind. Yeats abided by his father’s principles that the artist must be encouraged to change his intellectual convictions from day to day so long as he maintains the integrity of the soul. The integrity of the soul for Yeats meant probably was an unswerving devotion towards Irish nationalism. Yeats’s poetic mission was actually two fold in the way of freeing the soul from the fetters of religious dogma and cultivating the imagination to let it cross the boundaries of restrictive abstract intellectual principles. This is perhaps one of the reasons for which modern critics have called him “The Last Romantic.”

As his art matured Yeats became more and more convinced that art is the concrete expression of personal experience and that one of the smaller objectives of poetry is the beauty of speech. As late as 1899, Yeats still believed that the true course
was to ‘liberate the arts from their age and from life’. (Collins17) Poetry began to be
not just a criticism or confirmation of life it became a revelation of a hidden life. Here, it is important to note that Yeats’s father also, introduced him to the imaginative
literature (during his school days) by reading aloud to him Scott and Macaulay.

He also absorbed Balzac, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, Byron, and the pre – Raphaelites, Darwin, Wallace, Huxley and Haeckel. His father had a collection of
literary works in his personal library from which he also, introduced him to History
and Geology subjects that became a passion with Yeats during early youth. Yeats
complained that as a young boy he had been deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom
he detested, of the simple minded religion of his childhood. This had driven him to
make a new religion out of Irish myth and poetry. (Yeats, Autobiographies 14)

Other influences during Yeats’s early life were relatively minor as compared
to those of his father’s and grandfather’s. These influences were related to a multitude
of Sligo relatives Pollex Fen and Middleton cousins. Among his Sligo relatives was a
Middleton cousin Henry Middleton, who inspired the character of John Sherman in a
novelette by the same name published early in Yeats career. Henry Middleton become
a noted eccentric later on, but Yeats’s relations with him never faded out. Another
major and lasting influence during Yeats’s early youth was that of George Russell,
known as A.E. Yeats met him while he was in the Art school in London. A.E. was a
poet and mystic, besides being an artist. He sketched his religious inspirations instead
of imitating the models. Yeats and Russell wrote in rivalry and as a result contributed
richly to each other’s literary genius. It is well known that A.E. was a close
collaborator with him in the establishment and growth of Abbey Theatre.

In 1885, Yeats became the co-founder of the Dublin Hermetic Order. 1885 was
an important year, in Yeats’s early life marking the first publication, in the ‘Dublin
University Review’ of his poetry and the beginning of his interest in occultism. In 1885 Yeats met John O’Leary a famous patriot who had returned to Ireland after twenty years of imprisonment and exile for revolutionary nationalistic activities. O’Leary had a keen enthusiasm for Irish books, music and ballads, and he encouraged young writers to adopt Irish subjects, Yeats, who had preferred more romantic settings and themes, soon took O’Leary’s advice, producing many poems based on Irish legends, Irish folklore and Irish ballads and songs. O’Leary’s preoccupations with the literary revival, however, brought a new zest into his writings. O’Leary, who died in 1907, had become for Yeats a kind of symbol of national integrity. He stood high in the councils of the Fenian Brotherhood and for a time Yeats shared lodgings with him. In 1887, Yeats was working at the British Museum on an edition of Irish fairy and folktales. He genuinely believed in the existence of all the supernatural beings. He believed also, that these beings were within the reach of humanity on primitive plane civilized humanity could neither see nor comprehend these supernatural beings. He himself has said in his essay The Celtic Element in Literature that once all people in the world believed that trees were divine and could take a human or grotesque shape and dance among shadows. “They saw in the rainbow the still bent bow of a God thrown down in his negligence; they heard in the thunder the sound of his beaten water jar, or the tumult of his chariot wheels.” (Yeats, Essays and Introductions174)

His interest in folklore shows that he was in search of something beyond the established realm of poetic reality. His was a concrete purpose, to build up a new poetic tradition –His search for some philosophical idea, some tradition of belief older than the church, took him wherever his fancy led. Eastern philosophy and religion had a vague and distant lure. He was attempting to create a new religion, one of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from
their first expression. (Menon 12) Yeats believed that those imaginary beings were created out of the deepest instinct of man to be his measure and his norm. For Yeats they became a medium to express what was nearest to the truth.

In 1894, Yeats went to Paris and saw Villier’s Axel; he also met Bergson and Verlaine. Axel became for sometime his model and Villiers’ saying, ‘As for living, our servants will do that for us was used as an epigraph for ‘the secret rose’. The same year Yeats met in Lissadell the poetess Eva Gore Booth and also, Constance Gore Booth, who later played a leading role in the Irish literary movement, Yeats had discovered some literary talent in her and had become her mentor.

He came in contact with Walter Pater and Mohini Chatterji. Their philosophies were strong influences which lasted throughout his life. But somehow, the two opposing ideologies mitigated in Yeats’s personality. Pater accepted the dream world as real while Mohini Chatterji’s Samkaric abstraction rejected the objective reality as merely a dream world.

It was on January 30th, 1889 that he met Maud Gonne, the fiery radical nationalist and an Irish revolutionary. Charles Stuart Parnell, had died and Yeats met Maud Gonne on her way to the funeral, dressed in black and profoundly moved Yeats’s attitude towards Maud Gonne had a great deal to do with the state of mind that generate his early poetry. She becomes symbol of beauty; Yeats became increasingly passionate about her who became his muse and source of unrequited love. He proposed to her at least three times, in 1899, 1900 and 1901 and was rejected each time. He dedicated his early love poetry to Maud Gonne, Rose and Helen of Troy are adequate symbols for her, for like Helen Maud Gonne is beyond praise or comment. His love for Maud Gonne has been frustrated by her revolutionary zeal.
Maud Gonne the “Helen” and “Phoenix” of his poems was also a poetic symbol of Ireland.

In 1903, Maud Gonne married Major John MacBride, an exiled Irish patriot and Irish revolutionary. Yeats’ bitterness is apparent in many poems after the event, though his rejection in 1899 had left its mark. The anger against MacBride flared up again in Responsibilities. After two years in 1905, Maud Gonne separated from MacBride and Yeats again proposed her. In 1916, he once again became a staunch exponent of the Nationalist cause inspired by the Easter Rising, an unsuccessful six-day armed rebellion of Irish republicans against the British in Dublin. MacBride separated from Maud Gonne participated in the rebellion and was executed afterward. Yeats reacted by writing Easter 1916.

After MacBride’s death, Yeats visited Gonne in France, and for the final time, asked her for the marriage she declined, having once again become more interested in radical nationalism than in the role of poet’s wife. His love for her, and its pain, became a persistent feature of his poetry. Later, however, in 1917 he again proposed to Maud Gonne’s stepdaughter Iseult Gonne and she also rejected him.

On October 21, 1921, he married Georgie Hyde Lees, a 24-year-old English woman he knew through Olivia Shakespeare’s social circle and Golden Dawn. Only four days after the wedding he came to know that his bride produced ‘automatic writing’ this together with a mass of memories of earlier occult investigation and continuous and excited reading in history and its byways’ became the raw material of A Vision (1925). A Vision is an unusual philosophical work about mysticism and his bizarre concept of history. The book helped to explain the obscure symbolism of his later works. It presented the dualities often expressed in his later poetry.
According to C.M.Bowra, Yeats in his symbolism combined a mood of other worldliness derived from Celtic legends with an external descriptive manner that recalls William Morris, and to a less extent Keats. Through his friend Arthur Symons, Yeats met Mallarme and through Symons’ translations he came to know something of symbolism and its aims. To Symons, the propagandist of Symbolism in England, Yeats was “the Chief Representative of that movement in our country”. (Bowra184). Encouraged by this enthusiasm and feeling that he was in the only movement that was “saying new things,” Yeats adapted what he conceived to be Mallarme’s doctrine to suit his own views and wrote poetry accordingly. It is clear that he had discovered an untouched domain of ideas for his poetry, but what gave form to his poetry was the influence of the symbolist movement. It was through Arthur Symons that Yeats came in contact with this movement. The Symbolist Movement called for a new technique of expression, and a new style. Yeats’s own theories of symbolism were derived almost wholly from, those of Symons. (184)

In two essays, Symbolism in painting and the symbolism of poetry, Yeats willingly accept the view that symbols are essential to poetry and lays down his general principles.

All Art that is not mere story-telling or mere portraiture in symbolic, and has the purpose of those symbolic talismans which medieval magicians made with complex colours and forms, and bade their patients ponder over daily, and guard with holy secrecy; for it entangles in complex colours’ and forms, a part of the Divine essence.

Yeats does not regard poetry as complete in itself, with its own ritual and its own meaning. He sees it as part of a larger experience, as a means of communication
with the spiritual world which lies behind the visible. For him the poet is almost: a medium, an interpreter of the unseen, and his poetry is the record of the revelations given to him. Yeats is the man who had been brought up among folk tales and magical legends was curiously confirmed in his beliefs when he met the new theories from France. They supplied him with reasons for his own view of art and encouraged him to pursue the hieratic manner which he desired.

Yeats has some original remarks about the use of symbol he distinguishes as Mallarme did not, between two kinds of symbolism, the symbolism of sounds and the symbolism of ideas. The first class contains emotional symbols:

All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions, and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become as it were one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocation and yet is one emotion. (Bowra 185)

This passage is, in spite of its transcendental phrasing, of great importance in Yeats poetry.

Memory becomes a kind of reservoir, not merely of the poet’s own experiences in the past, but ultimately of all human thought and experience; since this lives on and can be called down, as it were, into present by dream, vision, or image; which in their turn can be definitely cultivated. The emotions
are ‘indefinable and yet precise’ which is the highest art of the symbolist poet, and which he achieved in the great period and after. The phase of Celtic symbolism is what Blake called ‘a dark mystery’; it lightens and clears until he relies on a few dominant images, closely linked to his own life, and established by repetition. It is through symbols that Yeats thinks; for the symbol becomes the means by which the reality which is no more than guessed at can be indicated and perhaps defined, though the symbol he can satisfy his instinct for the dramatic moment, the crystallization of the historical element in a dramatic irrational world. (Henn123)

Yeats limits the use of symbols to the expression of emotions but Yeats, closeness to ordinary life despite is magical airs isolate the emotions as a special field for symbol. The second class of symbols is that of ideas and about this Yeats says: As pointed out by C.M. Bowra,

There are intellectual symbols, symbols that evoke ideas alone, for ideas mingled with emotions … If I say “white” or “purple” in an ordinary line of poetry, they evoke emotions so exclusively that I cannot say why they move me; but if I bring them into the same sentence with such obvious intellectual symbols as a cross or a crown of thorns, I think of purity or sovereignty. Furthermore, innumerable meanings, which are held to “white” or to “purple” by bonds of subtle suggestion, alike in the emotions and in the intellect, move visibly through my mind, and move invisibly beyond the threshold of sleep
casting lights and shadows of an indefinable wisdom on what had seemed before, it may be, but sterility and noisy violence. (Bowra186)

Yeats recognizes that works call up associations, and though he has his own opinion of what such a process implies; his account of it is true to experience. Yeats does not go so far, he maintains that a symbol may stand for an idea and play a corresponding part in poetry. At the outset he rejects the drastic view which excludes as much thought as possible from verse.

Yeats has his vision of what this new poetry will be. It will be marked by a return to imagination to the state between waking and dreaming it will cast out energetic rhythms and seek “wavering meditative, organic rhythms”; it will pay great attention to technique and employ; if they are necessary even obscure and ungrammatical forms, but it must have the perfection that escapes analysis the subtleties that have a new meaning every day. As, said by Bowra,

Poetry is to be a record of a state of trance; it must take endless pains to be secured its effect by the right rhythm and the right associations; for otherwise the state of trance is broken. This theory partly re-states some of the fundamental principles of lyric poetry, partly introduces the revolutionary notion that a poem is a charm or instrument of enchantment. (Bowra, 187)

Yeats finds the symbolist doctrine to his taste not only because its high standards appeal to his artistic sense but because its mystical claims appeal to something mystical in him. It is not aesthetic rapture, not pure vision, not creative ecstasy, but a belief in powers behind the visible world, powers that are evoked from dream and trance for Yeats poetry is a communication with spirits, with an unseen
order of things. The poet is one who conducts the passage from one order to another and finds words for these mysterious messages.

Yeats’s symbols are all taken from a common stock and mutually related. Yeats normal method is to take some figure or creature of legend and through it to express some state of mind of his own. In the first edition he appears in different characters, as Aedh, Hanrahan or Michael Robartes according to the part that he plays, but in later editions these characters, are reduced to “he”. The crisis in his soul are depicted through legend. When he wishes to get away from ordinary life and feels the fierce fascinations of dreams, the influence that shakes him is figured in the Sidhe, the fairy people who travel in the wind and seduce men from their habitual lives. (Bowra 188)

According to T.R.Henn, a poet can establish his symbolism, and suggest its values, by one of the three methods. He can relate it, directly, or obliquely or sometimes negatively to such myths or history as already command a reasonable measure of acceptance; weighing the readiness of response against the loss that changes in cultural background is constant, he can be assured of an immediate response. When, for example, Yeats sees Maud Gonne in terms of Helen, there is acceptance, but the full significance of the lines

Another Troy must rise and set,

Another lineage feed the crow.

Helen in his poetry symbolizes Maud Gonne. up a kind of image-cluster in which Troy serves to illuminate the beauty of Maud Gonne ‘Was there another Troy for her to burn?’ And to form a stable recurring point for the revolution of the gyres of history in terms of *The Second Coming* Much classical history can be so ordered and
recombined to produce this recognition of its basic symbols, and to suggest still more complex values through other combination of them.

Secondly, he can use the so called archetypal symbols, water, fire, cavern, arrow, horse, and so on, relying on the constancy of human experience of dream and fantasy and vision in which such symbols appear. The penumbra of light thrown round the focal point of such a symbol will be usually deeper and more complicated than that supplied by history or myth; and the poet may achieve an inner conviction of the validity of his symbols through observing a constancy or recurrence, or ‘dispersed coincidence’ in dream or vision. His work will suffer, perhaps, in communication; because, while simpler symbols such as Moon, Sun, Dancer and Helen of Troy are reasonably clear without further explanation the interpretation tends to grow conventional, as when the audience is an order of initiates; or unduly imprecise, as in much later romantic poetry.

The third method is to create a personal mythology and a related symbolism, in the manner of Blake; and here success will depend on a gradual building up to determinant points of meaning through the use of symbols in varying contexts. This most difficult task will be hampered still further if the meanings themselves vary from context to context, and still more if the symbols give no traditional clue by their derivation or sound. Thus Blake’s arbitrary use of Oothoon, Enion, Athania or Orc forms a considerable obstacle; and if the labour involved in the necessary study appears likely to be inconsumerate with the result in the significance it proposes to establish, the myth will fail. Yeats used all three methods. (Henn119-120)
Yeats himself had very definite theories, as to the uses and effects of symbolism. He believed that symbols were effective in evoking emotions which so often were more subtle and complex. Yeats used natural symbolism very freely throughout the years, using flowers, trees, birds, animals and even fish to carry their own message and their own image. Flowers are used frequently and effectively. The rose is variously used to symbolize the spirit of beauty, transcendental love, perfection in any sphere. Rose symbolizes Maud Gonne. Or sometimes rose symbolizes Ireland. Poppies symbolize dreams and forgetfulness; lilies symbolize innocence and purity. Trees and parts of the trees are frequently used symbols as is not uncommon, Yeats uses the falling leaves as the symbol of mortality, but also uses them in the special sense of fading and dying love. The ceaseless fluttering of the leaves is used to represent the troubles and distractions of the world. A hazel wand and a hazel tree represent wisdom. The withering of the boughs is used to symbolize despair. A green branch represents Knowledge and learning.

Gyres, symbolizes any of the opposing elements that make up the existence, such as sun and moon, day and night, life and death, love and hate, man and God, man and woman, man and beast, man and his spiritual counterpart or ‘diamon’. (Ellmann, 153)

The two principal threads run through almost all of Yeats later poems; preoccupation with age, youth and beauty leading to the central antinomy between sensuality and asceticism, and a grappling with the crisis of the present civilization, leading to a vision of the dark future of humanity. Confronted with the problems of modern humanity and with his own descript age, the poet seeks a safe anchorage, the Tower and Byzantium poems are expressions of this craving for escape from this
ailing civilization and become related to *The Second Coming* and *Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen* poems like *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory* and

The different levels of intensity, are also, an attempt to escape from the present into the splendor and glory of the past. Thus the later poems reveal one principal thought. A certain deliberateness of outlook, an ironical zest and vigor and a wringing back of all that is obviously romantic, redeem them, however, from sentimental escapism, relating them to poems like *A Dialogue of Self and Soul*, which in spite of an obvious ambivalence, express the poet’s immeasurable lust for life”.

(Chateerjee100-101).

All these above mentioned poems will be discussed in other chapters in detail and will be analyzed the themes as well as major symbols in the later poetry of W.B. Yeats. Yeats’s concept of the imagination must be considered here. In *The Philosophy of Shelley’s Poetry* he writes:

“I have observed dreams and visions very carefully, and am now certain that the imagination has some way of lighting on the truth that the reason has not, and that its commandments, delivered when the body is still and the reason silent, are the most binding we can ever know”. (Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, 65)

William Blake influenced Yeats’s philosophy of the imagination and reality considerably. Blake, as Yeats points out in *William Blake and the Imagination*, believed imagination “the first emanation of divinity.” Therefore, Yeats remarks of Blake,

The reason, and by the reason he meant deductions from the observations of the senses, binds us to mortality because it
binds us to senses, and divides us from each other by showing
us our clashing interests; but imagination divides us from the
mortality by the immortality of beauty, and binds us to each
other by opening the secret doors of all hearts. (Yeats, Essays
and Introductions, 112).

As stated before, study is limited to the later works of Yeats though one do
realize that for a full resolution of the problem I am trying to examine it is necessary
to explore the Christian imagery and themes in the poet’s earlier works as well.
Scholars have pointed out that the poet’s themes and symbol are fixed in youth and
renewed with increasing vigor and directness to the end of his life. “This continuity”
as Ellmann notes, “is more surprising because it does not strike the reader at once, as
does the continuity of other poets like Wallace Stevens, E.E. Cummings and T.S.
Eliot” (Ellmann 1) An examination of the revisions of the texts of poems will bear out
the fact of the continuity of themes and symbols in Yeats’s works. However, for
reasons of convenience Critics have drawn a line of demarcation at the period of The
Wild Swans at Coole, (1919) which is commonly regarded as the point of departure
from the twilight world of Yeats’s early poems to the later poetry in his new realistic
vein.

In the matter of symbols, which are our main concern, The Wild Swans at
Coole marks a period of transition if not a major division. Ellmann observes that two
symbolic structures can be found in Yeats works, the first built up from boyhood, and
retained until after 1900, the other accumulating mainly from 1915 to 1929. The
period from about 1903 to about 1914 lacks, as says Ellmann “a clearly articulated
structure though it has elements of both the early and late ones and towards the close
of Yeats’s life from about 1935 to his death in 1939, the power of the second
symbolic structure is noticeably abated”. (Ellmann 63)

The early structure was largely made up of familiar symbols treated in an unfamiliar way, while the later structure contained much less common symbols which Yeats made to seem familiar. The later symbolic structure, beginning with *The Wild Swans at Coole*, till *The Last Poems* which is included in this thesis, consists of less common symbols.

The purpose of each of these chapters is to discuss the themes as well as major symbols in the later poetry of W.B. Yeats. The present thesis, consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, the introduction traces Yeats’ life from his childhood till his death. Some symbols are also discussed but not in depth because these are discussed in other chapters. All the poems from volume *The Wild Swans at Coole* to *The Last Poems* have been discussed in the consecutive chapters.

Chapter two consists of poems which discusses themes as well as major symbols of two volumes of Yeats poetry entitled *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) and *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) the fruits of change were manifest in all their strength. Yeats had found a new power of plain statement and wrote with directness about familiar and elementary passions. The Thesis discusses and tries to explores the use of themes and symbols in the poems. Chapter three consists of *The Tower* (1928) the most important aspect of his life during this period was that he became a “Public Man” being an active and controversial senator of the Irish Free State from 1922 to 1928. In 1923 he received the Nobel Prize for literature. It had reblossomed in *The Wild Swans at Coole* and *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, but the flowering came with *The Tower*. The poetry of *The Tower* period is rich because of the fullness of Yeats’s life, because his style was reaching maturity at the same time as his life. The poems of the twenties therefore deal with many of his interests,
politics, philosophy, friendship and love but they are all *The Tower* poems the work of a personality and a public figure who is writing for an audience. These two volumes are generally considered to be the peak of Yeats’ achievement.

*The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), *Words for Music perhaps* and *A Woman young and old* are included in chapter four and *A Full Moon in March* (1935) and *Last poems* (1936-39) or death poems as referred by many critics, are included in chapter fifth.

Chapter six is the conclusion and the final chapter of the thesis which summarizes the findings about the themes and major symbols in the later poetry of W.B. Yeats.
Works Cited


