CHAPTER IV

W. B. YEATS:

INTERIORIZING THE CHAOS
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In view of the fact that William Butler Yeats wrote his most celebrated poems in the early twentieth century, he is often considered as a modernist. Consequently, when a discussion of his Romanticism is involved, some scholars generally regard him as some kind of an effete or decadent Romantic poet despite the rich qualities of Romanticism his poetry offers and despite the declarations Yeats regularly made to maintain the importance of Romanticism to his own epoch “The movement most characteristic of the literature and art and to small extent of the thoughts, too, of our century has been romanticism”

Yeats distinctly bridges up the gap between the romantic and the modernist. His modernism, in fact, gets a renewed and revitalized touch owing to the romantic predilections of his poetic art. Yeats composed most of his celebrated poems in the early 20th century and adopted many ideology positions and radical stances like radical nationalism, classism, liberalism, reactionary, conservative viewpoints. He has, though, quite often been estimated as a modern poet. Yeatsian romanticism, however, has not adequate attention as yet.

This chapter attempts to evaluate Yeats’ literary achievements in the light of some of his poems focusing on the huge romantic imagery and sensory perceptions so as to recognize the romantic links that affiliate Yeats, the poet of the twentieth-century or the modernist poet, to Romanticism. This aspect of Yeats has not received adequate attention as it deserves.
Yeats is widely considered to be one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. Although he lived in London for fourteen years of his childhood, he maintained his cultural roots, featuring Irish legends and heroes in many of his poems and plays. He was equally firm in adhering to his self-image as an artist. This conviction led many to accuse him of elitism, but it also unquestionably contributed to his greatness.

He is Romantic and Modernist, mystical dreamer and leader of the Irish Literary Revival, Nobel prizewinner, dramatist and, above all, poet. He began writing with the intention of putting his ‘very self’ into his poems. T. S. Eliot, one of many who proclaimed the Irishman’s greatness, described him as ‘one of those few whose history is the history of their own time, who are part of the consciousness of an age which cannot be understood without them’.

The following is an attempt to break through the chaos in Yeats’ poetics for the purpose mentioned above i.e. affiliating him to Romanticism. The major themes of his works will be the starting point of this chapter.

The major themes of the works of Yeats are love, sex, personal relations, some locations and sceneries around Ireland, legends, nationalism, aging, mortality, and death, life and immortality, nature and artificiality. These seem apparently as common themes can be presented by any other poet. In Yeats’ productions, these themes received, in one way or another, a romantic treatment meanwhile presented to stand for the modern phase of the romantic poetry. Though these literary works are written in the modern age, they represent the main features of Romanticism. The following sections examine some of Yeats’ poetic works for the purpose of affiliating him to the traditions of Romanticism and, at the same time, identifying the modern romantic stream Yeats added to the Romantic Movement.
The theme of the need for a return to Nature is a predominant theme during the Romantic Age. Each of the major poets of the Age of Romanticism employs this theme as a vehicle for demonstrating a movement toward self-knowledge. However, the employment of the theme is usually for the purpose of elaborating on a possibly more significant theme in Romantic poetry. Each poet employs the theme in a different way to accentuate his or her overlying premise of the need for reflection and thought.

In his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth states his belief that the poet considers "man and nature as essentially adapted to each other and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature".

Coleridge does not believe as Wordsworth does that a return to Nature is necessary for self-knowledge. Rather, he believes that a respect for Nature is necessary for worshipping God and showing revere to Him.

John Keats offers no specific philosophy on nature. He rather seems to glorify it, celebrate and worship its magnificent beauty as it is.

Like Romantic poets, Yeats employs the theme of return to nature to accentuate his own purpose which is mainly Irish nationalism or self-identity as an Irish national. Yeats’ landscape descriptions are often obviously Irish, even if they do not include a specific place name. He highlights the rolling greenness and shifting light that characterize the Irish landscape. Additionally, some of his poems take a more specific approach to the Irish landscape. Many of the poems in *The Rose*, including *The Lake Isle of Inisfree*, treat a particular Irish place. Nearly all of these places are in County Sligo, Yeats' mother's ancestral home and the place on earth that he felt most connected to. Yeats was eventually buried in Sligo.
For Yeats, the different locations and sceneries around Ireland are the refuge to which Yeats escapes seeking peace for his exhausted spirit. *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* is a good example to discuss here. In this poem, the poet suggests that the simplicity, peace and tranquility of nature are the only cure for the troubled spirit of the poet and consequently for all humans as well:

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

The speaker in this poem yearns to return to the island of Innisfree because of the peace and quiet it affords. He can escape the noise of the city and be lulled by the "lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore." On this small island, he can return to nature by growing beans and having bee hives, by enjoying the "purple glow" of noon, the sounds of birds' wings, and, of course, of the bees'. He can even build a cabin and stay on the island much as Thoreau, the American Transcendentalist, who lived on Walden Pond. During his lifetime it was, to his annoyance, one of his most popular poems and on one occasion was recited (or sung) in his honor by two (or ten—accounts vary) thousand boy scouts.

*In the Seven Woods*, Yeats finds that the only source, that can bring peace to his terrible soul, is the natural beauty of the woods:

I HAVE heard the pigeons of the Seven Woods
Make their faint thunder, and the garden bees
Hum in the lime-tree flowers; and put away
The unavailing outcries and the old bitterness
That empty the heart.

The tired poet finds in the singing of the wood’s pigeons, which is like a faint thunder, and the sweet humming of the bees in the lime-tree flowers,
soothing for his worries. These natural cures helped him to forget his “unavailing outcries and the old bitterness/That empty the heart”.

Nature is the source of both inspiration and ecstasy and the most sublime state of man. It can be a landscape for lovers too where they can enjoy their love away from the substantial world. In the poem To an Isle in the Water, the lover, whose beloved is too shy to enjoy her love with him, wants to be alone with her in the arms of nature:

To an isle in the water
With her would I go.

The same idea can be detected in the poem The Indian to his Love. This poem is a rich source of natural images from the beginning to end. The poem launches by drawing a very wonderful natural scene of the Island where the lover is planning to sail to with his love:

The island dreams under the dawn
And great boughs drop tranquillity;
The peahens dance on a smooth lawn,
A parrot sways upon a tree,
Raging at his own image in the enamelled sea.

The dawn is the roof under which the island is dreaming, where tranquility emitted from the great boughs, on the smooth lawn the peahens are dancing and upon a tree a parrot sways furiously looking at his image that is reflected in the enameled sea. To this landscape the Indian lover will sail with his beloved away from the noisy world:

Here we will moor our lonely ship
And wander ever with woven hands,
Murmuring softly lip to lip,
Along the grass, along the sands,
Murmuring how far away are the unquiet lands.

There they can be the only mortals in the immortal world of Nature. This world will disguise their love into an immortal natural form i.e. it will be turned into an Indian star or a meteor that has wings will gleam and dart with the tide:
How we alone of mortals are
Hid under quiet boughs apart,
While our love grows an Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the tide that gleams, the wings that gleam and
dart.

Not only will their love be immortal; but the lovers themselves will be
turned into eternals too. When they die, the boughs or nature itself will
moan and sigh for their death. Then when eve prevents all feathers from
flying, lovers’ souls will rove with a single vapoury foot glittering in the
drowsy water:

The heavy boughs, the burnished dove
That moans and sighs a hundred days:
How when we die our shades will rove,
When eve has hushed the feathered ways,
With vapoury footsole by the water’s drowsy blaze.

Nature will immortalize the lovers and their love by allowing them to
have a natural form.

The same idea can be found in The White Birds where the poet wishes
that he and his beloved could escape from their circumstances and be
together. This wish is captured in the image of the two of them being
transformed into white birds floating on the sea-foam: “I WOULD that
we were, my beloved, white birds on the foam of the sea!” then they will
be eternalized because time would forget them:

I am haunted by numberless islands, and many a Danaan shore,
Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come near us no
more;
Soon far from the rose and the lily and fret of the flames would we
be,
Were we only white birds, my beloved, buoyed out on the foam of the
sea!

In The Withering of the Boughs, Yeats found in the different forms of
nature: moon together with the peewit, and the curlew, faithful
companions with which he can find mutual sympathy and understanding:

I CRIED when the moon was murmuring to the birds:
'Let peewit call and curlew cry where they will, 
I long for your merry and tender and pitiful words, 
For the roads are unending, and there is no place to my mind.'

One night as he was alone with nature, Yeats was touched by the moon murmuring to the birds requesting them to sing because he, i.e. the moon, longs for their sweet songs. The moon, as well as Yeats, is suffering from having no rest. The poet feels a kind of identification with nature i.e. the moon is personified to be lovely and pale lying on the sleepy hill. Yeats fell asleep upon the lonely Echtge of streams, as well. Both, the moon and Yeats fell asleep out of tire. Yeats’ suffering resulted from his frustrated dreams. His suffering affects even the green boughs which lost their greenness and flush out of their sympathy with the poet:

The honey-pale moon lay low on the sleepy hill,  
And I fell asleep upon lonely Echtge of streams.  
No boughs have withered because of the wintry wind;  
The boughs have withered because I have told them my, dreams.

Like Romanticists, Yeats understands nature in a romantic way. He realizes nature from different meanwhile romantic points of view. Firstly, nature is a vehicle toward self-knowledge or self-consciousness, his preoccupation with natural phenomena amounts to a search for the true self, for his own real identity i.e. Yeats’ Irish nationality as discussed above.

Secondly, it is a healing power. For him, nature is a source of sensations or healthy feelings. It is a therapy for a diseased, over civilized heart. For him, humans can discover emotional health in nature. To an Isle in the Water, The Indian to his Love and The White Birds are good examples for this romantic idea.

Thirdly, nature, from Yeats’ point of view, is a refuge from the artificial constructs of the civilized world. The poem The Lake of Innisfree, expresses the idea that nature provides an inherently restorative
place to which human beings can go to escape the chaos and corrupting influences of civilization.

Thus, Yeats’ exploration of the theme of nature is paradoxical because he saw nature from contradictory points of view. Nature is immortal in comparison to humans, as discussed above, that is why lovers want to have a natural form so as to be eternalized. This idea is also clear in *Wild Swan* when Yeats envies the wild swans whose hearts could not grow old:

‘Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.’

And in the same poem nature is also changeable:

By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away?’

And in *Easter 1916* he sees transience in nature’s beauty too:

‘A shadow of cloud on the stream  
Changes minute by minute’

The poem *The White Birds* contains some natural forms that are temporal and can increase the lovers’ suffering that is why he wants his beloved to ignore them:

We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade and flee;  
And the flame of the blue star of twilight, hung low on the rim of the sky,  
Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a sadness that may not die.  
A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew-dabbled, the lily and rose;  
Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the meteor that goes,  
Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung low in the fall of the dew:

In *Sailing to Byzantium*, the natural forms are all mortal since they are born and die:
'The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas, 
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long 
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies'

On the contrary, Keats’ nightingale, which is immortal “thou was not born for death, immortal bird! / No hungry generations tread thee down”; Yeats refers to “birds in the trees” as “those dying generations.”

In this poem nature is transient in comparison to artificial that can be much more eternal. The natural world is primarily typified by imperfection, decay, the continual impurities of desire, and the limits of time. On the other hand, artificiality is depicted as perfect, unchanging, and timeless. For this reason the aging man, Yeats, will search for an artificial form for his body so that he can be eternalized in the city of Byzantium:

Once out Of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

This celebration of Grecian art and its immortal joy reminds us of Keats’ *Ode on a Grecian Urn* where the speaker envies the immortality of the lute players and trees inscribed on the ancient vessel because they shall never cease playing their songs, nor will they ever shed their leaves. They shall remain permanently depicted while the speaker changes, grows old, and eventually dies. And the idea of the eternal artificial golden bird can be contrasted to the immortal real nightingale of Keats.

In spite of the fact that seeking a refuge in nature is one of the main romantic traditions; some romantics seem to escape the real world not always to nature but to an imaginary place, city or society. What to be concluded here is that even when Yeats, the modern romantic poet, seeks
unnatural refuge in arts or any other imaginary place; he is not the only romantics to do so. If he looks forward to live in Byzantium, which is an ideal place for him, Blake is eager to live in a New Jerusalem where he can have an ideal society to live in.

Yeats’ *Sailing to Byzantium* can be compared to William Blake’s *A New Jerusalem* from “Milton”. Blake wanted a place that established balance, understanding, and wisdom. Blake also wanted an idea of where people were going in life instead of believing in predestination. Blake and Yeats both have ideas for what they want their lives and their own world to be like. Some of their ideas seem to be similar, while others clash and are completely different.

In *Sailing to Byzantium*, Yeats wrote "And therefore I have sailed the seas and come/ to the holy city of Byzantium," (Lines 15 and 16). This line suggests that Yeats was on a spiritual journey to find the place that he belongs to, a place that will last forever. Yeats also wrote that he wants stability and to get away from the real world. Blake also wanted to find a place and rebuild a new society.

In *A New Jerusalem* from "Milton", Blake wrote, "Til we have built Jerusalem, In England's green and pleasant Land" (lines 15 and 16) to refer to the rebuilding of a better place. Jerusalem refers to the Holy Land, where Blake feels that he can become closer to Jesus Christ.

In *Sailing to Byzantium*, Yeats wrote of the animals as "sensual music" (line 7) which helps the audience feel the peacefulness that he yearns for. Yeats uses his thorough descriptions in this poem to make his audience see where his heart wants to be amidst the chaotic world that he had currently lived in. Yeats was also complaining of growing old in this poem and how the world takes away so much of people's innocence and they are left without traditions, intelligence, and consequences of their actions. William Blake's poem also circulates around the theme of the
loss of innocence. Blake becomes aggressive in the third stanza of *A New Jerusalem*, writing:

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Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold! Bring me my
Chariot of fire!” (Lines 9-12).
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Blake will go to any length to find or to build this new place. A place to start over with everything he began with and a place where he will have wisdom and a vision for life.

William Blake and William Butler Yeats are both extremely talented poets. Blake wants a world revolved around God, while Yeats prefers a world based on art and nature. Each poet discusses in detail his needs to get away and be secluded from the world around him. Art and God make these poets happy and therefore make up the world in which they wish to live.

Going back to the paradoxical way Yeats adopted to handle the theme of nature will show that Yeats seems, also, to see the radiance of nature’s beauty:

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‘I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;’

(Innisfree)

‘The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky’ (Wild Swans)

‘The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call’ (Easter)

‘An acre of green grass
For air and exercise’ (Acre)
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In *The Wild Swans at Coole*, W. B. Yeats uses vivid nature imagery to enhance his central natural ideas and contrast them to humanity. He paints obvious pictures to convey his fascination of nature; the poet's
images and meanings are delivered to us via a unique selection of diction and certain phrases, structured especially to expose nature's beauty.

Yeats distinguishes nature as two different parts: animals-creatures as part of nature, and the atmospherically wholesome portion of nature (including natural sceneries: trees, plants, seas, rivers, mountains, hills.....etc, and different types of weather). He describes the trees as beauties in "trees in their autumn beauty", and woodlands as being "dry", stable and secure while he seems overtaken by the sun's beautiful preset "under the October twilight." We can easily visualize this striking sun-halfway-in-the-sky scene, which makes this image vivid and sticking, letting us know that nature is fixed in his mind and it is the dominant feature of his world. He reinforces this image of the stunning natural atmosphere in "water mirrors a still sky", showing that the sky is clear; there is no wind, which could symbolize nuisance, and everything is tranquil, serene and peaceful; and almost surreal.

But Yeats finds unattractive side in nature too:

‘The bees build in the crevices
Of loosening masonry, and there
The mother birds bring grubs and flies’ (Stare)

‘while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds’ (Second Coming)

Though Yeats offers a paradoxical treatment for the theme of nature, no critical eye can deny the romantic links in this paradoxical treatment. Thus, the theme of return to nature in Yeats seems obviously to link him to the traditions of Romanticism.

Like a romanticist, Yeats underscores the significance of individualism which enjoys equally important place in the romantic fervor.
Individuality is an attitude, adopted by romanticists, in which individuals tend to convey their own feelings, principles and opinions without regard to how others might react. For them, their own individual identities are superior to all the principles, attitudes and traditions of their societies. It is no exaggeration to claim that it is this feature that enriches Romantic poetry and diversifies its sources because out of this attitude each romanticist adds his own unique imprint, which reflects his individual attitudes to Romanticism.

Like Coleridge, who seeks his individuality by the means of supernaturalism, and Keats, who seeks his individuality through aesthetic trajectory; Yeats finds his own individual identity by the means of symbolism, occult, Irish myths and folklore. This section will discuss Yeats’ attitude and views on the importance of individual independence, art and politics, nationalism, Irish myth and folklore, and his faith in divine, occult, and mysticism, and how his individual attitudes affect his own poetic productions.

Yeats believes that freedom and independence of an individual is prior to the freedom and independence of a nation. Due to this attitude individuals should not lose their individuality or personal independence for the sake of anything even the independence of their nations. “Elizabeth Cullingford sees only one Yeats, who means what he says, and is just as he appears to be”⁹. Yeats, in her opinion, always stuck to the same principles, i.e. those of the school of John O'Leary which tends to the belief in Irish nationality and in the liberty of the individuals. When forced to choose between independence for all and liberty for one, he would choose liberty¹⁰. "There are things a man must not do to save a nation,"¹¹ O'Leary said and Yeats forever repeated. It is not hard to figure out, although Cullingford does not press the point, that the list of things that one should not do even to save a nation is long. Indeed, from other
things O'Leary said or Yeats did, one can add that a good nationalist does not insult a lady, kill a civilian, participate in an election, or bend to the will of the majority. "Yeats' overriding passion," Cullingford rightly inquired whether the passion for liberty is Yeats' own liberty in particular. The freedom of the Irish nation as a whole could wait a long time, even forever, if its attainment required the sacrifice of the individual freedoms enjoyed by Yeats and granted him by a colony of the English empire.

Cullingford's book aims to change the picture Conor Cruise O'Brien drew of Yeats in his essay "Passion and Cunning", a complex portrait of the poet as calculating, snobbish, authoritarian, patriarchal, and sometimes delighting in violence, very nearly the type of the authoritarian personality that emerged in right-wing movements of the 1930s. O'Brien's Yeats looks for the main chance to impose his will; Cullingford's Yeats sees a distant vision of a free Ireland, but keeps an eye out to stay clear of any group that would impose upon his privileges. While these formulations can be reconciled, one emphasizing Yeats' power over others, and the other his insistence that none should have power over him, the general characterizations of the poet by the two critics are absolutely contradictory: O'Brien depicts Yeats as an aristocratic colonist and possible fascist; Cullingford rehabilitates Yeats as a liberal nationalist.

While Cullingford's book, written under the guidance of Richard Ellmann, is well documented and scrupulously dated, her conviction that Yeats is morally and politically consistent causes her to overlook the importance of occasion to the content of Yeats' remarks. For example, much of her evidence that Yeats was a liberal thoroughly in sympathy with the mass movement toward nationality, even after Maud Gonne's marriage in February 1903 and Horniman's offer of a theatre in October 1903, comes from a speech Yeats made to the Clan na Gael in New York
in January 1904. It is possible that Yeats gave the Irish-Americans what they wanted i.e. an individualist, democratic, and heatedly nationalist Ireland, not unlike America. After his return to Ireland, Arthur Griffith brought up Yeats' remark to a New York reporter that the Irish dramatists "now study what the people want, and they give it to them in such form that thirty or forty police must often be stationed inside the theatre to prevent riots."12

*Sailing to Byzantium* is a good example to discuss here. One of the ways to read this poem is to trace Yeats’ individuality. He prefers monuments of intellect to nature which represents mortality of life:

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Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.
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Only by being transformed into a piece of art (a golden bird) can he be immortalized:

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O sages standing in God’s holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,…
And be the singing-masters of my soul…

…………….and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity…
……
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.
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The speaker in the poem *The Song of the Happy Shepherd* starts by describing the modern world and contrasting it to the old world, "The woods of Arcady." He suggests that the problems of the new world cannot be solved or dealt with by looking to history or to the stars, but only by looking into our own hearts for answers. He then finishes by telling us that he still lives in the past “and still I dream he treads the lawn”, and cannot begin to address the future, but that is better left for someone young and energetic “dream thou!”
For Yeats, an individual should not be either forgotten in the past or molten in the present; but rather he or she should look into their hearts to find satisfying answers for their problems; nothing deserve losing individual independence. Individuality should not be lost for the sake of anything because even the independence of a nation does not deserve losing our individuality because how it will be possible for a nation, whose individuals are defeated from inside, to be liberated! And how a nation can be independent if her people are dependent?! So, Yeats’ views prove to be logical because the independence of a nation’s individuals is the main step to get a nation’s independence because the independence of a nation whose individuals are dependent is meaningless.

To Yeats, "individuality is not as important as our age has imagined" because Yeats’ individual attitude to individuality does not mean revolting completely against the ancient but rather making use of the diamonds of the ancient memories which acted upon the individual, and one's creativity was an expression of these forces. These symbols and images could be brought to consciousness and expressed artistically via magic and ritual. Yeats' poetry was intended as an expression of these ancient symbols but this expression has a Yeatsian print. This resurgence of these age-long memories required a revolt of soul against intellect now beginning in the world and this is what Yeats intends to do.

Not only does Yeats intend to express or revive the diamonds, images and symbols of the ancient memories in his own way, but rather called for a revival of aristocratic values. This is out of his particular concern that commercialism would mean the pushing down of cultural values in the pursuit of profit rather than artistic excellence. For example in his poem A Prayer for my Daughter is a detailed advice to his daughter to be an aristocratic girl and to follow the conducts of the aristocratic society to enjoy her life as a wife in the ideal way:
And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all’s accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony’s a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

His appeal was to the artist and to the individual of taste and culture, as the philosopher Nietzsche had pointed out; culture is the faculty that distinguishes the human from other organisms. In this spirit, Yeats applauded Nietzsche’s philosophy as, "a counteractive to the spread of democratic vulgarity"14.

Yeats believes that individuality does not stand against celebrating the ancient art out of which individual’s creativity can be emerged. Thus celebrating the memories of the past as well as the artistic values represent an important part of his individuality.

**Linking Art and Politics**

Yeats believed that art and politics were intrinsically linked and used his writings to express his attitudes toward Irish politics, as well as to educate his readers about Irish cultural history. At early age, Yeats deeply connected to Ireland and his Irish national identity, and he thought that British rule negatively impacted Irish politics and social life. Since British Rule suppressed Irish folklore as well as Irish history; Yeats’ early compilation of folklore aimed at teaching Irish history and his early poems celebrate the beauty and mystery of the Irish countryside. Oisin and Cuchulain are among the Irish figures Yeats frequently refers to and integrates in his literary productions. His poems increasingly resembled political manifestos as a reaction of being involved in some politics such as the Irish National Theatre, the Irish Literary Society, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and Maud Gonne. Poems like *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death* (1919), and *A Meditation in Time of War* (1921) are
about Ireland’s involvement in World War I whereas some other poems are about nationalists and political activists like *On a Political Prisoner* (1921), *In Memory of Eva Gore Booth* and *Con Markiewicz* (1933) meanwhile the Easter Rebellion is celebrated in the famous poem *Easter 1916*. Yeats managed to use art “to serve a political function: poems could both critique and comment on political events”\(^\text{15}\), so as to spread information about Irish privacy.

Such themes of both politics and nationalism lead critics to affiliate Yeats to the traditions of modernism which tend to inter into the chaos of politics with all its complexities. Whatever the reaction critics adopted to Yeats’ interest in politics, Yeats employed professionally his artistic skills to serve his political attitudes which strongly advocate the rights of his homeland Ireland. Additionally, the way Yeats handled the theme of politics is highly artistic, winged with imagination and overwhelmed with warm emotions of patriotism which bring Yeats closer to the traditions of Romanticism. Yet, handling politics artistically is one of Yeats’ individual characteristics as a poet.

Many factors led Yeats gradually to doubt about Christianity and finally to reject it as a religion. Among these factors is his devotion to mysticism which led to the development of a unique spiritual and philosophical system that emphasized the role of fate and historical determinism, or the belief that events have been preordained. Yeats had rejected Christianity early in his life; but this does not mean that he converted to atheism. As a result of his lifelong study of Mythology, Theosophy, Spiritualism, Philosophy, and the Occult; his profound interest in the divine and how it interacts with humanity was demonstrated. Over the course of his life, he created a complex system of spirituality, using the image of interlocking gyres (similar to spiral cones) to map out the development and reincarnation of the soul. Yeats believed
that history was determined by fate and that fate revealed its plan in moments when the human and divine interact. A tone of historically determined inevitability permeates his poems, particularly in descriptions of situations of human and divine interaction.

The divine takes on many forms in Yeats’ poetry, sometimes literally *Leda and the Swan* (1923), sometimes abstractly *The Second Coming* (1919). In other poems, the divine is only gestured to (as in the sense of the divine in the Byzantine mosaics in *Sailing to Byzantium* (1926). No matter what shape it takes, the divine signals the role of fate in determining the course of history. Yeats’ profound faith in the matchless power of the Divine and its great effect on human life and the course of human history led him to reject Christianity. Such faith composes one of Yeats’ individual attitudes in life which adds a distinguished stream to his versification.

The relation between Yeats’ faith in the Divine and his interest in mysticism and occult is widely interchangeable. Mysticism and occult in his poetry are highly connected to his faith in the divine and the opposite is true. This is because his deep fascination with mysticism and the occult, explains why his poetry is infused with a sense of the otherworldly, the spiritual, and the unknown. As it has been mentioned above his interest in the occult began with his study of Theosophy as a young man and expanded and developed through his participation in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn which was a mystical secret society. Mysticism figures prominently in Yeats’ discussion of the reincarnation of the soul, as well as in his philosophical model of the conical gyres used to explain the journey of the soul, the passage of time, and the guiding hand of fate. Mysticism and the occult occur frequently in Yeats’ poetry, most explicitly in *The Second Coming*, *Sailing to Byzantium* and *The Magi* (1916).
The rejection of Christian principles in favor of a more supernatural approach to spirituality creates a unique flavor in Yeats’ poetry that impacts his discussion of history, politics, and love and this adds a distinguished feature to Yeats’ individual literary participation in English literature in general and in Irish literature in particular.

**Modernity and Romanticism**

Since Yeats lived during the late 19\(^{th}\) century and early 20\(^{th}\) century, he was considered as a transition from the Romanticism of the 19\(^{th}\) century to the Modernism of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Yeats started his long literary career as a purely romantic poet and gradually, as a reaction to some circumstances around him especially Irish subjects, evolved into modernity. So, many critics regard him a modernist poet. When he began publishing poetry in the 1880s, his poems had a lyrical, romantic style, and they focused on love, longing and loss, and Irish myths. His early writing follows the conventions of romantic verse, utilizing familiar rhyme schemes, metric patterns, and poetic structures. Although it is lighter than his later writings, his early poetry is still sophisticated and accomplished. Many reasons contributed to his poetic evolution: his interest in mysticism and the occult led him to explore spiritually and philosophically complex subjects. His frustrated romantic relationship with Maud Gonne caused the starry-eyed romantic idealism of his early work to become more knowing and cynical. Additionally, his concern with Irish subjects evolved as he became more closely connected to nationalist political causes. As a result, Yeats shifted his focus from myth and folklore to contemporary politics, often linking the two to make potent statements that reflected political agitation and turbulence in Ireland and abroad. Finally, and most significantly, Yeats’ connection with the changing face of literary culture in the early twentieth century led him to pick up some of the styles and conventions of the modernist
poets. The modernists experimented with verse forms, aggressively engaged with contemporary politics, challenged poetic conventions and the literary tradition at large, and rejected the notion that poetry should simply be lyrical and beautiful. These influences caused his poetry to become darker, edgier, and more concise. Although he never abandoned the verse forms that provided the sounds and rhythms of his earlier poetry, there is still a noticeable shift in style and tone over the course of his career. Being born by the late 19th century and early 20th century and being one of the Irish patriotic residents, Yeats’ character as an individual has been dyed with unique features composed of mixed contradictories of both the purity of Romanticism and complexities of Modernism. These contradictory features constituted main part in Yeats’ individual character and consequently clearly shown in his literary works.

As an Irish national poet, Yeats cannot help incorporation of distinctly Irish themes and issues into his work. His writing was used as a tool to comment on Irish politics and the home rule movement and to educate and inform people about Irish history and culture. Yeats also used the Irish background to retell stories and legends from Irish folklore. His poems took on a patriotic tone, as he became increasingly involved in nationalist politics. Yeats adopted variety of ways to address Irish politics: sometimes his statements are explicit political commentary, as in An Irish Airman Foresees His Death, in which he addresses the hypocrisy of the British use of Irish soldiers in World War I. Such poems as Easter 1916 and In Memory of Eva Gore Booth and Con Markiewicz address individuals and events connected to Irish nationalist politics, while The Second Coming and Leda and the Swan subtly include the idea of Irish nationalism. In these poems, a sense of cultural crisis and conflict seeps through, even though the poems are not explicitly about Ireland. By using
images of chaos, disorder, and war, Yeats engaged in an understated commentary on the political situations in Ireland and abroad. Yeats’ active participation in Irish politics informed his poetry, and he used his work to further comment on the nationalist issues of his day\textsuperscript{19}. Irish nationalism constitutes a profound role in Yeats’ manipulation and handling of various themes in his literary productions. His constant supporting attitude in favour of everything belongs to Ireland gives his literary productions a special Irish flavor distinguishes him among other English writers.

Using Irish myth and folklore has an interchangeable relation with Yeats’ nationalism as an Irish poet. Being a patriotic Irish national, he highly participated in the Irish political system which was a result of his interest in Irish myth and folklore. Church doctrine and British control of the school system aimed at suppressing Irish myth and folklore. As a reaction to such inhuman deed, Yeats used his poetry as a tool for re-educating the Irish population about their heritage and as a strategy for developing Irish nationalism. He retold the entire Irish folktales in epic poems and plays, such as \textit{The Wanderings of Oisin} (1889) and \textit{The Death of Cuchulain} (1939), and used fragments of stories in shorter poems, such as \textit{The Stolen Child} (1886), which retells a parable of fairies luring a child away from his home, and \textit{Cuchulain’s Fight with the Sea} (1925), which recounts part of an epic where the Irish folk hero Cuchulain battles his long-lost son by at the edge of the sea. Other poems deal with subjects, images, and themes culled from folklore. In \textit{Who Goes with Fergus?} (1893) Yeats imagines a meeting with the exiled wandering king of Irish legend, while \textit{The Song of Wandering Aengus} (1899) captures the experiences of the lovelorn god Aengus as he searches for the beautiful maiden seen in his dreams. Most important, Yeats infused his poetry with a rich sense of Irish culture. Even poems that do not deal explicitly with
subjects from myth retain powerful tinges of indigenous Irish culture. Yeats often borrowed word selection, verse form, and patterns of imagery directly from traditional Irish myth and folklore. Such folklore and myths were employed skillfully by Yeats in order to deepen and strengthen the feeling of Irish nationalism and the Irish patriotism not only inside the hearts of the Irish nationals but also inside the conscience of the whole world. The Irish nationalism has been revived predominantly by means of both myths and folklore which were handled in a way turns them into perfect schools teach both Irish culture and history.

To sum up one can conclude that Yeats has his own distinguished individual independence which he considers more important than the independence of his nation; but his individual independence does not stand against the ancient heritage. This heritage, for Yeats, acts upon the individual whose creativity is an expression of the past forces. And the revival of the old memories requires a revolt of soul against the intellect of the time being. Not only did the intellect of the time being require revolting; but also commercialism as well. Yeats considers commercialism a serious obstacle of both cultural values as well as artistic excellence that is why he calls for revival of artistic values. His appeal was to the artistic and to the individual taste and culture. As a result of the political problems his nation Ireland was suffering, he, as a poet, believed that both art and politics are intrinsically connected. He uses art as a means to defend the political rights of his own nation Ireland.

In spite of the fact that Yeats rejected Christianity as a religion, he believed in fate, in the fact that events have been preordained and in the interaction of divine with humanity. He developed a complex system of
spirituality as well, i.e. inter locking gyres, mapping the development and the reincarnation of the souls.

Yeats’ individual identity is superior to all the principles, attitudes and traditions of his own society and of the different literary eras as well. Such revolting and superiority of individuality is one of the main traditions adopted by the romanticists.

These are the main figures of W. B. Yeats’ individual attitudes and his position of life which is deeply distinguished and leads consequently to a distinguished and a new creative stream flows into the deep and widely colorful river of Romanticism. This stream, if possible to say, can be called modern romanticism.

Imagination is the ability to form a mental image of something that is not perceived through the senses or the ability of the mind to build mental scenes, objects or events that do not exist, are not present or have happened in the past. Imagination makes it possible to experience a whole world inside the mind. It gives the ability to look at any situation from a different point of view, and enables one to mentally explore the past and the future.

Imagination is a creative power that is necessary for inventing an instrument, designing, painting, or writing verse or prose. This ability is the supreme ability for the romantics.

Being elevated to a position as the supreme faculty of the mind, imagination contrasted distinctly with the traditional arguments for the supremacy of reason. The Romantics advocate imagination and regard it the ultimate shaping or creative power, the approximate human equivalent of the creative powers of nature or even deity. From the point of view of the romantics, imagination is a dynamic, an active, power with many functions. It is the primary faculty for creating all art. On a larger scale, it is also the means and tool to constitute reality. This is suggested
by Wordsworth when he pretended that the romantics did not only perceive the world around them, but also in part created it. In addition to that imagination is also considered the result of unifying both reason and feeling as Coleridge described it with the paradoxical phrase, "intellectual intuition". It is glorified as the ultimate synthesizing faculty since it enables humans to reconcile differences and opposites in the world of appearance. Such reconciliation of opposites is a central ideal for the Romantics. Not only do romantics regard imagination as the faculty to form reality, the uniting of feelings and reason, and the power that enables humans to reconcile the opposites, but rather it enables them to read nature as a system of symbols that is why it is inextricably bound up with nature and symbolism which represent two major concepts of Romanticism.

W. B. Yeats was not only a great poet but also a great imaginative mind. Not only do his works mark a cultural watershed in European civilization, but he additionally drew upon the world culture: Irish mythology, Indian wisdom, Arabic, Japanese, and much besides. “The extent and import of his learning cannot be appreciated by a mentality that merely reflects current materialist values. The Irish poet stood within a tradition of spiritual and esoteric knowledge which has been largely ignored by his critics making many of their judgments inappropriate”.

Kathleen Raine meditates deeply in Yeats’ imagination and finds out that Yeats’ imaginative ability is quite unique due to the means he applied to get access to the unlimited world of imagination:

Yeats did not possess Swedenborg’s psychic gift, nor Blake’s soaring imaginative vision. States of expanded consciousness came to him seldom, and then through magical techniques, mediumship, and other aids towards opening of the mind. Yeats was, one might say, a scientific investigator, but winged by that attitude of imaginative assent which serves to create the reality towards which it is directed- nothing less that the
building of worlds- the heaven’s and the earth’s- the soul inhabits.23.

Diving deeply in the poems Yeats wrote leads to the fact that imagination used by him as a road to transcendental experience and spiritual truth. With the help of ‘imagination wings’, like folklore, myths, legends, and creative symbols, Yeats manages to present his poems in a modern meanwhile romantic way. In his love poetry, personal relation poetry, poetry of nature and even that of nationalism, Yeats intends to be dreamy rather than being awakened and prefers reverie to real thoughts. George Bornstein finds similarity between Yeats and Blake in this point:

Like Blake Yeats’s imaginative speakers seek to move beyond nature into a more permanent world of spirit or intellect or art. In the late “An Acre of Grass” he invokes Blake along with two of Shakespeare’s most passionate character in an effort to get beyond the merely physical world:

Grant me an old man’s frenzy,
Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till truth beyond his call.24

And like Coleridge in his Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Yeats in his A Vision finds his path to truth through psychosis. In the poem called The White Birds, Yeats finds happiness in imagination rather than reality. In the imaginary world he and his beloved, Maud Gonne, can be transformed into two white birds. Then they can have a chance to live together apart from the sorrow and the mortality of the real world that dooms them to live away from each other:

Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come near us no more.

In Leda and the Swan, Yeats reaches reality via imagination: as a result of God’s assault on Leda, in the form of a swan, “is the birth of Helen of Troy, the subsequent destruction of early Greek civilization, and the
beginning of the modern era”\textsuperscript{25}. Yeats transfers his true physical desire through the legendary medium of \textit{Leda and the Swan}.

The status of the poetic imagination and the nature of its vision are constantly fought out in Yeats’ poetry with the word ‘dream’ a key battleground. In the early confident \textit{To Ireland in the Coming Times}, Yeats claims extra authority for his position as patriot poet because:

\begin{quote}
My rhymes more than their rhyming tell  
Of things discovered in the deep,  
Where only body’s laid asleep.
\end{quote}

The poet’s reverie gives him access to deeper than ordinary sources of knowledge; dream and truth are equated as consubstantial:

\begin{quote}
While still I may, I write for you  
The love I lived, the dream I knew.
\end{quote}

In the discouraged mood of the late \textit{Circus Animals’ Desertion}, it is just such an equation that is denied. In this disenchanter retrospect, the phantasmagoria of the poetry was a mere secondary derivative of self interested passion. And this brought forth a dream and soon enough:

\begin{quote}
This dream itself had all my thought and love.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Yeats was strongly affected by the 19\textsuperscript{th} century romantic poet William Blake. Blake’s effect on Yeats is so great that any study of William Butler Yeats cannot be complete without the study of William Blake, just as a study of Blake is greatly aided by a study of Yeats. The two poets are inexorably tied together. Yeats, aided by his study of Blake, was able to find a clearer poetic voice. He had a respect for and an understanding of Blake's work that was in Yeats' time without parallel. Yeats started reading Blake at the age of 15 or 16 when his father gave him Blake to read. Yeats writes in his essay \textit{William Blake and the Imagination} that reading Blake is similarly like blowing the spray of an inexhaustible fountain of beauty into our faces (Yeats, Essays xxx). He believed Blake to be a genius that is why he (Yeats) never wavered in his (Blake’s)
opinion. It is his respect for Blake that caused him to study and emulate Blake. He tried, also, to tie Blake closer to himself by stressing Blake's rumored Irish ancestry. He strove to understand Blake more clearly than anyone had before him, which he succeeded to do. Though with other pursuits Yeats held nothing back, he immersed himself fully in Blake's writings. Thus, with many of his mental pursuits he deepened his understanding of the subject by writing about it.

This section is discussing the Yeatsian wings to the unlimited world of imagination i.e. symbolism, whose sources are nature, occult, mysticism, historical myths and legends:

Being the chief representative of the symbolist movement, Yeats has been called the master of symbolism. “Indeed, Yeats was a symbolist poet long before he had heard of the French” symbolism that is why one cannot say that he belongs to the French symbolist movement; “but rather he belongs to a general European symbolist movement of which the French were the leaders.” His symbolist was not based upon French poets but rather “upon the poetry of Blake, Shelly, and Rossetti”. The poetry of Blake taught him the magical symbols; the poetry of Shelly confirmed his symbolic system. Additionally, most of his symbolism based on his reading of books on the occult and upon Irish folklore and legends as well.

In order to express emotion and higher meaning in a usually short and concise length of words, Yeats managed to employ the mechanisms of poetry-rhythm, rhyme, meter-along with the use of both emotional and intellectual symbols. The use of such symbolism is clearly shown in many of his works especially in such pieces as The Second Coming, The Valley of the Black Pig, and No Second Troy. The way Yeats adopted to treat the theme of emotions through symbols and the words he selected to invoke these emotions is predominantly matchless.
In Yeats’ essay *The Symbolism of Poetry*, he explains his theory of how rhythm, rhyme, and meter should be properly applied in poetry. He says that the rhythm should be musical, not stilted in any way by a strict form, and the same goes for meter. There is an underlying rhythm and meter throughout his poetry; he uses them in a way that makes its presence come secondary to the ease of reading the poem naturally. This is clear in poems like *The Second Coming* and *The Valley of the Black Pig*. Sometimes he seems to be more worried about the content of the poem than any particular meter that is why he tends to use variation in rhythm. The following lines:

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out (*The Second Coming*)

And:

THE dews drop slowly and dreams gather: unknown spears  
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,  
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries  
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears. (*The Valley of the Black Pig*)

show examples of this. Yeats explains in his own words, "The purpose of rhythm...is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety...to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind, liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols". As it is clear here Yeats seems to believe that a natural, musical rhythm, through this state of trance that it induces, helps the mind reach a dreamlike state in which everything is expressed and understood in symbols and understood more purely than if the logical side of the mind were to pick
at the poem. Thus, his use of symbols is justified in one way through his preference of a looser rhythm.

Yeats explains in his essay that the best purpose for using rhyme is easing memorization. In this sense he believes for rhyme to be recursive and to draw a connection among lines in the poem. The rhyming words get the brain to inadvertently recall the line or lines before it that rhymed with the last line they have read which make memorization much easier. “The motion of this recursive rhyming theory can be seen as a needle sews in a loop, two stitches forward and one stitch back, weaving a story fragment and an emotion into the mind of the reader”\textsuperscript{32}.

Yeats, in the same essay, describes symbolism in many different ways: as the language of dreams, as emotional or intellectual, and as an ever-changing level of meaning that differs from person to person and time period to time period. He believes that the images evoked by symbols constitute the essence of poetry. The meaning of a poem should not be merely one, but a poem should have many meanings to many people of different times. Throughout almost all of his poetry there are symbols to be felt or interpreted. In his essay, he gives one type of symbol which is an emotional symbol. This emotional symbol is the use of the word purple to describe hills or clouds; it gives a serene feeling but also perhaps a sad feeling, though for no particular, logical reason. The second type of symbol Yeats writes about is an intellectual symbol; this is a symbol that stands for something and its meaning is learned, such as, the cross standing for forgiveness or Jesus, or a white lily standing for purity. Yeats says that intellectual symbols are the most effective because they convey depths of meaning rather than just a general feeling or nostalgia. He says:

\begin{quote}
It is the intellect that decides where the reader shall ponder over the procession of symbols, and if the symbols are merely emotional, he gazes from amid the accidents and destinies of the world; but if the symbols
\end{quote}
are intellectual too, he becomes himself a part of pure intellect...If I watch a rushy pool in the moonlight, my emotion at its beauty is mixed with memories...but if I look at the moon herself and remember any of her ancient names and meanings, I move among divine people...

Yeats' poem *The Second Coming* is full of intellectual symbols: gyre, falcon and falconer, lion body, rocking cradle, and Bethlehem, just to name a few. Each of these intellectual symbols depends on the person's individual knowledge that is why they can be interpreted differently; but some are only linked to one thing, such as Bethlehem, which can only be linked to the city of the same name and specific historical or religious meaning.

The symbols and allusions Yeats uses and the emotional colors that those symbols paint in the reader's mind make his poetry very dreamlike and create deep levels of meaning to his poems. If a poem, such as *No Second Troy*, is read lightly it gives off a simple emotion from its wording and subject matter. But with deeper study into the history of both Yeats and the poem, one learns who the woman is that he speaks of and why he says such things of her as: "[She has] taught to ignorant men most violent ways, or hurled the little streets upon the great..." And "With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind / That is not natural in an age like this,..." However, there is a comparison and contrast of the woman in the poem and Helen of Troy. Thus, a whole discussion of the poem could be drawn up from this comparison and contrast of the two women.

Yeats knows certainly his theories on symbolism in poetry and how to apply them appropriately. Employing skillfully both mechanics and content makes these qualities shown clearly through his works. The ideas of his essay obviously define and influence his poetry and his perspective of it. Clearly he is a master of symbolism even among his peers. His knowledge may affect his symbols in a way, the moon, for example, to
have a meaning may be more than just a moon, and a flower to have connotations deeper than mere a flower. A word about Yeats’ theories seems necessary to approximate Yeats’ poetic stance. To grasp the concept of Yeats’ theories and appreciate their growth, it is vital to understand his symbol of the gyre. A single gyre is a geometric figure, resembling a funnel, which begins at a fixed point. From this point the spiral grows wider and wider until it reaches its maximum growth. At this climax, the single gyre “begins to retrace it path in the opposite direction.” In contrast to this single vortex is the double gyre, “where two vortices intersect and the apex of one is at the centre of another.” Yeats related more to the double gyre’s duality; therefore, he chose to apply it to his developing thoughts.

The gyre appears frequently in Yeats’ poems and was developed as part of the philosophical system outlined in his book *A Vision*. At the beginning, in order to articulate his belief that history was structured in terms of ages, Yeats used the phases of the moon, but later on he seemed to settle upon the gyre as a more useful model. So as to symbolize his philosophical belief that all things could be described in terms of cycles and patterns, he chose the image of interlocking gyres, visually represented as two intersecting conical spirals. The soul (or the civilization, the age, and so on) would move from the smallest point of the spiral to the largest before moving along to the other gyre. Although this is a difficult concept to grasp abstractly, the image makes sense when applied to the waxing and waning of a particular historical age or the evolution of a human life from youth to adulthood to old age. The symbol of the interlocking gyres reveals Yeats’ belief in fate and historical determinism as well as his spiritual attitudes toward the development of the soul, since creatures and events must evolve according to the conical shape. By the skillful way Yeats mastered to employ the image of the
gyre, he managed to create a shorthand reference in his poetry that stood for his entire philosophy of history and spirituality\textsuperscript{39}. Thus, the symbol of the gyre is turned into a code for and key to Yeats’ complicated philosophy on both human history and spiritual development since it illustrates briefly such complex Yeatsian philosophy.

“The Phases of the Moon”, part of the 1919 collection “The Wild Swans at Coole”, explores the importance of the moon’s phases in relation to the gyres. The Great Wheel being addressed is actually the cycles of the moon divided into twenty-eight phases that also influence human life and action. The creations of Yeats’ imagination in this poem were the two speaker men, Robartes and Altherne. And this can be regarded the starting point of Yeats where he himself progresses through the gyre\textsuperscript{40}.

The parallels of the evolution of Yeats’ theories on gyres and his own poetic expression can be traced through *The Phases of the Moon*, *The Second Coming*, *The Tower*, and *Sailing to Byzantium*. Yeats begins his journey into the realm of the gyres by focusing on the end of Robartes and Altherne’s journey. Standing on a bridge after their “long wandering”, the men watch a poet in an illuminated tower above them. The poet, on an endless quest for insight, strikes Altherne’s pity, and he asks why the all-knowing Robartes does not impart the advice the poet seeks. Robartes replies, “He wrote of me in that extravagant style/…Said I was dead; and dead I choose to be”. With that, Altherne suggests that Robartes sings the moon’s phases as he has done before.

Robartes chants the twenty-eight cycles in which the moon progresses from dark to light to dark again, closely resembling the motion of the gyres. The two differ slightly, however, in how the moon has two phases, the first and the fifteenth, that are out of reach of man because of their implied perfection. Known as the full and dark stages, respectively, they
represent fixed ideas, certainty, and reality. The moon, a metaphor for the growth of one’s soul, parallels the soul’s journey through the darkness in search for the “Antithetical”, or something more personal and illusory. The soul does so by “happy adventure… (and then pursues)…whatever whim’s most difficult” among those possible. At the full phase, number fifteen, the “self-canceling state of perfect intellectuality” takes over:

All thought becomes an image and the soul
Becomes a body: that body and that soul
Too perfect at the full to lie in a cradle,
Too lonely for the traffic of the world:
Body and soul cast out and cast away
Beyond the visible world. (The Phases of the Moon)

At this point, the only choice is to revert to or enter in on the “crumbling of the moon” in phases sixteen to twenty-eight. The soul, unable to handle its absolute achievement, turns its focus onto worldly affairs. Welcoming “duty… (and)… service”, the soul leads itself down the opposite path into deformity as the “Hunchback and Saint and Fool”.

Robartes has finished his tale, and the old men walk away, satisfied with their knowledge. As they depart, “a bat circles and squeaks”, symbolizing the chaos at the center of the gyre. The light in the poet’s tower disappears and, along with the circling bat, suggests that either the poet is ending his quest or he is starting anew with newborn hope.

Influenced by the direct relation between the poet’s achievement of a point of birth or destruction and the current state of destruction in the world, Yeats embellishes “his cyclical theory of history” in his methodical poem, The Second Coming. He hypothesizes that each separate generation is the opposing force of other generations.

While one civilization’s people are born, live, and die, they unconsciously move towards their own annihilation. From this civilization’s death, another civilization arises. This new society, like its
predecessors, lasts about 2000 years. The point at which one era’s struggle for death coincides with the next era’s struggle for birth proves a violent and critical turn of the gyre\textsuperscript{42}.

Yeats proves the reoccurrence of the gyres by building on earlier depictions of a metaphorical pagan beast that he believes will soon walk the earth. He alludes that the beast rises from the desert, though it is unclear if the animal represents a sphinx or a manticore. Each half-human figure symbolizes the personal revelation Yeats hoped would come to humanity. His original idea of the sphinx first appears “having ‘woman’s breast and head’”, which derives from another of his 1919 poems, i.e. \textit{The Double Vision of Michael Robartes}. Just as Yeats’ use of the hawk transforms into a falcon in \textit{The Second Coming}, the adaptation continues by changing the sphinx to the manticore. Yeats describes his version of the manticore by reprocessing the ideas of Edward Topsell, Edward Hulme, and Flaubert. Though Yeats manages professionally to employ the gyre’s characteristic of recycling history, his use of the symbol of manticore seems to serve many purposes. This can be shown by the modern interpretation of the manticore that belongs entirely to Yeats himself. He does just not refer to many of the traits typically possessed by the manticore or the sphinx, but rather he still conveys the message of each monster’s “reputation as (a) man-eater”. In fact, Yeats’ theory of employing history to reinvent the early beasts reveals the cycle of the gyres is not merely a theory, but rather a principle practiced by human beings\textsuperscript{43}.

Actually, Yeats’ theory of history that centered on the movement of gyres has been attracting educated people since Yeats up to this moment. Roger Cohen, the foreign correspondent, then foreign editor and columnist in \textit{New York Times}, finds an explanation of the dramatic
change in the Arab world in the year, 2011, on the basis of Yeats’ theory of the gyre. He marked Yeats’ lines: “Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer.” And comments on Yeats’ vision that:

… involved the notion that at any moment forces were raveling and unraveling, forming and disintegrating in Yin-Yang polarity, an idea Yeats represented through two conic helixes — “gyres” superimposed on each other with the apex or narrowest point of one at the center of the other’s base. Moments of crisis occurred as history shifted from the outer to the inner gyre.

That was when, for Yeats writing in 1919, soon after the end of World War I, “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold:/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”

This year has seen a dramatic acceleration of history in the Arab world, the falling apart of a rotten order; an unraveling that has birthed the “rough beast” of new societies where people will have a say in how they are governed rather than being trampled by Paleolithic tyrants.

In his article, Cohen refers to al- Bouazizi, the Tunisian young man, who represents the narrowest point at which the base of a new cycle or gyre in the modern history of the Arab World has started. This new historical cycle has been brought to birth by the Arab Youth Revolution (Spring or Jasmine Revolution) that has flamed at the same moment al- Bouazizi when he started fire in his body.

Roger Cohen ends his article, which depicts political and social views on the revolutions of the Arab youth, by apologizing to both Ireland and its poet Yeats for applying the lines Yeats wrote for Ireland on the modern Arab world: “With apologies to Ireland, the emerald isle, and its poet, I note that Yeats wrote that it was “Wherever green is worn” that all is “changed, changed utterly” and “a terrible beauty” born.”

44

45
Whatever the purposes served by the symbol of the gyre, it stands as a dominant feature characterizes Yeats’ unique and complicated philosophy of imagination.

There is yet another symbol, ‘Swan’, which enjoys a place of crucial importance both, in his philosophy as well as his poetic vision.

Swans are a common symbol in poetry, often used to depict idealized nature. Yeats employs this convention in “The Wild Swans at Coole” (1919), in which the regal birds represent an unchanging, flawless ideal. In Leda and the Swan, Yeats rewrites the Greek myth of Zeus and Leda to comment on fate and historical inevitability: Zeus disguises himself into a swan to rape the unsuspecting Leda. In this poem, the bird is fearsome and destructive, and it possesses a divine power that violates Leda and initiates the dire consequences of war and devastation depicted in the final lines. Even though Yeats clearly states that the swan is the god Zeus, he also emphasizes the physicality of the swan: the beating wings, the dark webbed feet, the long neck and beak. Through this description of its physical characteristics, the swan becomes a violent divine force. By rendering a well-known poetic symbol as violent and terrifying rather than idealized and beautiful, Yeats manipulates poetic conventions, an act of literary modernism, and adds to the power of the poem.

The symbols of swans are recurred in William Butler Yeats' Leda and the Swan, The Wild Swans at Coole and Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen. In fact, so far the symbol of swan in those poems is assumed to have several meanings. Critics interpreted the symbol of swan in those poems differently according to references they used such as Greek mythology, Irish legend and history and Yeats' philosophical point of view. Malins, for example, stated that the swans in Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen related to Yeats' philosophical point of view symbolize subjective man⁴⁶.
On the other hand, Jeffares claimed that the swans in the same poem, related to Ireland history, symbolize solitary soul\textsuperscript{47}. Those contradictions often lead readers into confusion. That is why the writer tries to reveal whether critics’ opinions about the real meaning of Yeats’ symbols of swans can be justified.

Such contradiction aroused by Yeats’ use of the symbol of the swan approves strongly the multiple or unlimited imaginary purposes served by this symbol. Any philosophy of exploration adopted to reveal this symbol whether historical, legendary, Irish, Greek or international, is an open gate for an open comprehension for this symbol. This widely-open comprehension of this symbol makes it possible to say that the symbol of the swan in Yeats has been used in a privileged way so far.

The meaningful dimensions of philosophy and also of life are signified by paradoxes and paradoxical juxtapositions. If beauty is to be talked about and if the beauty has to be streamlined, it cannot be done in an engaging way just by eulogizing beauty. It can best be done by juxtaposing or projecting the beast or beastiality, violence or annihilation. Poetry, as a medium of creative expression enjoys a vintage position in this regard as it may take a circuitous recourse through poetic tropes rather than a prosaic expression. Yeats, therefore, ostensibly and quite often masterfully incorporates symbols that emblematize negativity.

Yeats employs the figure of a horrific and violent animal which he called the great beast in order to embody difficult abstract concepts. The symbol of the great beast is taken from Christian iconography, in which it represents evil and darkness. In \textit{The Second Coming}, the great beast emerges from the Spirituous Mundi, or soul of the universe, so as to function as the primary image of destruction in the poem. Yeats describes the onset of apocalyptic events in which the “blood-dimmed tide is
loosed” and the “ceremony of innocence is drowned” as the world enters a new age and falls apart as a result of the widening of the historical gyres. The speaker predicts the arrival of the second coming, and this prediction summons a “vast image” of a frightening monster pulled from the collective consciousness of the world. Yeats modifies the well-known image of the sphinx to embody the poem’s vision of the climactic coming. By rendering the terrifying prospect of disruption and change into an easily imagined horrifying monster, Yeats makes an abstract fear become tangible and real. The great beast slouches toward Bethlehem to be born, where it will evolve into a second Christ (or anti-Christ) figure for the dark new age. In this way, Yeats managed to symbolize complex ideas about the state of the modern world by using distinct concrete imagery.48

The symbol of the beast is used to serve Yeats’ point of view in different poems. Yeats used this symbol for 23 times in his lyrics and each is used differently. In The Lady’s Second Song, Yeats personified the beast which refers to men:

Limbs a Love in common
With every noble beast.

whereas in other poems it refers to all animals that can live on the earth. This is clear in The Madness of King Gol: “From girl and boy and man and beast;”. The beast has been also joined with the bird in more than one poem to express the same sense i.e. animals that can live on the earth:

O beast of the wilderness, bird of the air,
(He Thinks of his Past Greatness).

Nor bird nor beast
Could make me wish for anything this day,
(Shepherd and Goatherd).

But summons to adventure and the man
Is always happy like a bird or a beast;”
(The Phases of the Moon)
And thereupon there comes that scream
From terrified, invisible beast or bird:”

(An Image from a Last Life)

...there is
Among birds or beasts or men
One that is perfect or at peace.

(The Dancer at Cruachan and Cro-Patric)

’Whatever stands in field or flood,
Bird, beast, fish or man, (Tom the Lunatic).

Though the symbol of the beast has been used in Yeats to indicate variety of ideas like wild animals, all animals that live on the earth, some sort of human beings etc. all these ideas seem to be ordinary if compared with the sophisticated philosophical ideas Yeats managed to convey by using this symbol and for this reason the Yeatsian symbol of the ‘beast’ has received great attention by critics of both Modern and Postmodern eras. Yeats’ handling of this symbol to serve such complicated functions is another evidence of his creative imagination.

Ambiguity or richness of Yeatsian poetic excellence is manifest to his use of ‘tower’ symbol. The tower is one of the richest and most ambiguous symbols of Yeats. It is the tower near Coole Park Galway, which Yeats bought and lived in for some time in his life. He put it in the poem The Phases of the Moon which appeared in “The Wild Swans at Coole”, where he described it:

...chosen this place to live in
Because, it may be, of the candle-light
From the far tower where Milton’s Platonist
Sat late, or Shelley’s visionary prince.

Shelley’s visionary prince was Prince Athanase who sat a part from men as in a lonely tower. At the same time, in The Tower, Yeats was fancying himself as a Platonist because the age of amusement i.e. his youth hood together with his boyhood are no more there. So, he should find another
source for muse and joy rather than body joy which are the muse of the mind and spirit by accompanying friends of wisdom represented by Plato:

Never had I more
Excited, passionate, fantastical
Imagination, nor an ear and eye
That more expected the impossible—
No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly,
Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulben’s back
And had the livelong summer day to spend.
It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
Until imagination, ear and eye.

Yeats’ famous poetic work, “The Tower”, is one of the finest poetic groups that employ the symbol of tower in a very effective way. It is the beginning of the poet's best years, and coincides with his long-delayed requited love, and a long-delayed return to Ireland, where he buys the dilapidated Castle Ballylee, restores it, makes it his home, and in this writers opinion, the ideal symbol of how he has crafted his life with his own hands. Moreover, the poem, The Tower shows readers a new Yeats; “gone” is his preoccupation with youth and physical beauty. In this poem, he seems to feed up with his aging body:

WHAT shall I do with this absurdity—
O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog’s tail?

That is why he turns to the enrichment of the soul and to his own immortality, as in the opening poem Sailing to Byzantium. Upon moving to the newly rechristened Thoor Ballylee, the referent of the volumes title, Yeats sees this tower as a setting for his old age, a place to influence lawless youth, with its severity and antiquity.

Out of Yeats’ fear of decline over time, he uses the deterioration of the tower as a central image for the decline of his own family. Moreover, this sequence serves to unite Yeats’ traditional themes with those of the civil war. Thus, the entire collection of poems in “The Tower” is connected by
both his repulsion towards the modern world and his withdrawal into the
tower, his dependence on his imagination and his art.

One might say that Yeats was at the center of a gyre of chaos. His
idyllic dreams for Ireland conflicted with the violence of the post-war
world and revolutionary Ireland. However, Thoor Ballylee became his
bulwark against these outside tensions that he strove to resolve physically
and emotionally within the tower. So, Yeats’ ultimate symbol of this
struggle is Thoor Ballylee, where he could retreat from and observe
modern violence and purposelessness to turn inward and question the
world in safety as he created meaningful responses through poetry. The
tower was Yeats’ platform to sing his last song and declare his faith:

I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare
This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my
ancestral stair;
That Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have
travelled
there. (Blood and the Moon)

The tower has been, so far, a symbol of retreat of intellectual or spiritual
asceticism. On the other hand in poems like Blood and the Moon, “it
becomes a symbol of the assertiveness of the Self, of physical egotism, of
the urges of earth and blood.” In the lines quoted above the winding
stairs of the tower exceed the substantial material of being stairs and turn
into historical gyres through which travelled Yeats’ ancestors: Goldsmith,
the Dean, Berkeley and Burke. Thus, not only does the tower but all its
parts integrate together to enrich Yeats’ symbolism and consequently
sharpen his creative imagination.

The props from nature are invariably used in the romantic as well as in
the modernist poetry with their multifarious connotative and denotative
possibilities. The rose is the case in point here.
Art in general and poetry in particular carry within themselves those eternal symbols which contribute to define the power of archetypes. The artistic production of W.B. Yeats took place during positivism; in a period dominated by the rational approach.

The rose is the symbol that goes over a strictly poetic dimension to be present as universal symbol in a great number of cultures. Just a few flashes concerning the imaginary background of this symbol can be given here: the rose in tradition, initially attributed to Venus, the goddess of pagan love. This type of flower is bound later to be filtered by Christianity in order to be re-directed inside the values recognized by the Catholic Church. It is anyway evident that the apex of the concept of Love, both considered in its earthly and spiritual aspect, is synthesized in the rose found in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, where he verifies the Middle Ages in the spirit of courtly love and in the theological interpretation of divine love. The last cantos of the Paradise are dominated by the huge mystic rose, on the white petals of which sit the saints; the sun, symbol of the trinity, illuminates the scene: the sun that gives life to the rose and the rose which manifests the glory and the power of the sun are inseparable and interdependent symbols: the fact that it blossoms thanks to the divine sun is the expression of the eternal realization of all that is temporal; that is why Dante’s love for Beatrice, in the same way as man’s love for a woman, from a personal experience should assume a transcendent meaning. This assumption (also underlined by C. Baudelaire in his theory of ‘correspondences’), which states that any entity in the natural world corresponds to a supernatural counterpart, is at the basis of the symbolist movement, developed at the end of the 19th century, to which Yeats belonged. According to Yeats, art must be symbolic, since only a symbol can express an invisible essence and thus escape from the poverty of an excessively ordered conscience; this poet believes that the encounter with
Wisdom (Sophia) can only take place far from conscience. Yeats took his symbolic iconography from many sources: ethnic tradition, the cult of Irish heroes, the fight for the Home Rule (Irish political freedom), the disappointment which followed the poet’s unhappy love for the actress Maud Gonne, and a new interpretation of the world, connected to Jung’s psychology and archetypes. With regard to this conception, it is interesting to notice that Yeats, as early as 1901, had already elaborated, in his essay Magic, and the theory of the Great Memory which stated the existence of a collective memory, seat of all myths and universal archetypes that can only be evoked through symbols. This means that, according to Yeats, the symbol is the universal element common to the historical mind and to the universal mind. On the other hand, if we believe in the eternity of the mind, the poet’s job will be close to the one of a Socratic scholar: the liberation of eternal man from his temporal chains.

As far as symbols are concerned, we cannot forget that Yeats owes much of the richness of his symbols and images to his approach first to Blavatski’s Theosophical Society and later (in 1890) to the Rosicrucian movement of The Golden Dawn, founded by Mac Gregor Mathers.

As for the symbol of the rose, Yeats uses this symbol to mean different ideas, but it always stands for untamed Ireland beauty in one way or another. In Irish mythology Ireland is called “Roisin Dubh”, whose translation is “the dark rose”. His exploration of the rich natural and narrative history of his homeland through his poetry stands as a unifying force behind the poems in the collection of “The Rose”. Like its name the flower, the poems in this collection are at once beautiful, sensual and thorny. The poems in the collection “The Rose” as a whole comprise the young Yeats’ homage to his homeland. Not only does the rose stand for Ireland; but it rather stands for his lost love Maude Gonne.
whose beauty is also untamed. Both his love and his homeland have been alternatively symbolized by the rose in a way reflects Yeats’ creative imagination.

The relics from ancient civilization, occult symbolic system, Celtic legends play a role of great importance in the projection of his poetic imagination. This imagination and concomitant poetic idiom is further flavoured by recreation and poetic incarnation of the past and its complete contextualization.

The Turkish ancient city Byzantium is one of the problematic symbols used by Yeats the old man who is seeking eternity via means of arts. When Yeats approached old age and came to feel the weakness of his body meanwhile the maturity of his artistic career, he sought immortality in the artistic ancient city of Byzantium i.e. by being transformed into a golden bird singing for the emperors and princess of Byzantium. He wants to send a message to the following generations that poetry as well as other forms of arts is immortal and Byzantium is the symbol that helps him to deliver his message to his contemporaries and to the future generations as well.

James Haines comments on Yeats’ imaginative capability in his two Byzantium poems where Byzantium plays a major role in two mature poems: *Sailing to Byzantium* (1926) and *Byzantium* (1930). Though Yeats never visited Istanbul, when travelling through Italy he did see Byzantine church mosaics in Ravenna and Sicily. It is probably from these experiences that the idea of using Byzantium as a symbolic contrast to the Ireland of his day (which he refers to as “no country for old men” in the earlier of the two poems) came to him.

Writing of *Sailing to Byzantium*, Yeats noted that “When Irishmen were illuminating the Book of Kells and making the jeweled crosiers in the National Museum, Byzantium was the centre of European civilization
and the source of its spiritual philosophy, so I symbolize the search for the spiritual life by a journey to that city”\textsuperscript{53}. Yeats’ letters and prose commentaries show that, he viewed Byzantium as a sort of heavenly realm which, through its art and architecture, will last eternally. He saw Byzantium as a place where life is a unity of religion, aesthetics and practice, a place where artists and craftsmen “spoke to the multitude and the few alike”, a place where he “could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even”\textsuperscript{54}.

Actually, the symbols used by Yeats are innumerable and many times Yeats used the same symbol for different purposes and in different contexts. Many of his symbols are obscure and almost unintelligible to the uninitiated readers. The obscurity and incomprehensibility of Yeats’ symbols is a natural result for the fact that they are mostly driven from Yeats’ occult studies.

The 1890s were a time of great turmoil and rapid development for the young poet William Butler Yeats. During this period, he worked on a number of editorial projects and published several collections of poetry. The influences during this period of his life would remain relevant throughout his work: Celtic myth, William Blake, and the occult. As Yeats became more deeply involved first in Theosophy (religious philosophy or speculation about the nature of the soul based on mystical insight into the nature of God) and then in Hermeticism (the study and practice of occult philosophy and magic, associated with writings attributed to the god Hermes Trismegistus) and the correspondences among those traditions, the writings of Blake and Celtic myths became more apparent to him. From those materials he began to construct a unique occult symbolic system for a proposed Celtic Mystical Order.
Yeats’ occult philosophy was set forth in his 1901 essay *Magic*. Although it was much elaborated in *A Vision* (1925), it was never rescinded:

I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are, in the power of creating magical illusions, in the visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed; and I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are --

1. That the borders of our minds are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.

2. That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.

3. That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.55

Yeats’ literary output during this early period was prolific. By 1895, A. H. Bullen had published a volume of Yeats’ collected works, and he was recognized as one of the major living writers in the English language. In spite of the fact that he ultimately lacks success in establishing a Celtic Mystical Order, Yeats’ occult system remained the framework for most of his writings. Like the druid bards of his early poetry, Yeats came to see himself as an Irish visionary who would revive his country’s dormant spiritual heritage56. And out of this heritage he managed to choose the most interesting meanwhile the most lasting symbols that immortalized his literary works as well as his Irish identity. This Celtic occult or mysticism together with Irish myth and legends winged Yeats with powerful wings enabling him to dive deeply into the unlimited world of imagination. If nature resources him with sensed symbols, Celtic occult,
mysticism, Irish myth and legends enabled him to get access to the real imaginary world in which the dominance only for imagination.

From early on in his career, Yeats drew inspiration from legends and myths of pre-Christian Ireland. Poems such as *Fergus and the Druid* and *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* display Yeats’ use of ancient Irish mythology as themes to convey ideas and emotions that can be experienced by his contemporary audience in a similar way than what the earlier generations of Irish people experienced. One particular legend as that of Cuchulain was not only a major theme in Yeats’ work, but it was present in his poetry and drama throughout his career: Yeats used Cuchulain as a character in his poems and plays from 1892 to 1939. By closely examining the political and personal circumstances surrounding Yeats’ output one can understand the poet’s reasons for continually using the legend of Cuchulain as a theme in his work. Not only did he use Cuchulain extensively in his work, but one can actually trace the Yeats’ progress as a writer in his use of the legend. The cycle of Cuchulain in Yeats work began with the 1892 poem *The Death of Cuchulain* and ended in 1939, just before Yeats’ death with the poem *Cuchulain Comforted*. The Cuchulain plays, which are one-act, reveal Yeats’ preoccupation with limiting the time and space in which the action unfolds. Yeats was not interested in recounting the legend of Cuchulain for informational motives, but rather he used the legend of Cuchulain as theme to communicate moments of intense feeling where the hero’s plight resonates with the struggles the Irish faced in their day-to-day lives. Even if Cuchulain is portrayed as a hero and warrior in Yeats’ work, the context surrounding the events are not entirely magical: because Cuchulain has been characterized as a man who has flaws, makes mistakes, and ultimately dies.
Although a nationalistic context was behind Yeats’ interest in the ancient Celtic legends, Yeats was not interested in reclaiming those legends as mere accounts of Ireland’s history. According to Reg Skene, “Historical reading of the old sagas tended to obscure their mythological significance and dull their power to stir the imagination”57. What Yeats ultimately wished to accomplish by using those old legends and myths as themes in his work was to provide his audience with ideas and emotions that would spark a new faith in Ireland, instead of focusing on reviving the history of Ireland as a static movement; Yeats was not interested in making his audience aware of what had already happened to Ireland, but rather in using Ireland’s past as a starting point to inspire new feelings about modern Ireland.

One obstacle Yeats faced when trying to interpret the ancient legends was the fact that they were available mostly in the oral format, which allowed those familiar with the stories to shape them according to their own experiences and interpretations. In Yeats, Joyce, and Ireland, Thomas Flanagan discusses the problem:

An oral literature indeed survived, but it was the possession, almost entirely, of the peasantry, who had shaped it to the particularities of their own existence, endowing heroes and gods alike with form and meaning far different from that bestowed by the aristocratic, prefeudal society which had given them birth 58.

The respite from such obstacle came from Lady Gregory, who surmised “a language grounded firmly upon the syntax and diction of peasant Ireland but flexible enough to encompass other and subtler purposes” 59. In 1902 she produced one of the crucial texts of the Irish Literary Revival, Cuchulain of Muirthemne, which “draws together into a coherent narrative the fragmentary accounts of (Cuchulain’s) the hero’s life, battles, and death”60.
When Yeats got Gregory’s translation of the legend of Cuchulain, he began to interweave the folkloric material he believed would not only enhance the impact of Cuchulain’s legend on his audience, but also contribute to his initial intent to inspire the new generations in Ireland. Within that framework Yeats began to shape the legend of Cuchulain as a prominent subject for much of his material; it is clear the poet identified with Cuchulain, because it is worthy to mention here the delicate relationship Yeats had with his father which can be a possible subtext to the father-son conundrum present in the legend of Cuchulain.

Although William Butler Yeats’ did not intend to use ancient Celtic legends and myths to communicate politics, his effort to revive the state of the Irish cultural world resonated with the political battles surrounding the creation of the Irish Free State. Though Yeats failed in shaping the Irish National Theatre, he succeeded in inspiring the Irish people to look at the past history of the country in order to take pride in the present and future of the nation. Through his craft and sensibility to infuse the old legends with more contemporary aspects to which his audience could better relate, Yeats reclaimed the legend of Cuchulain and in so doing also helped to reclaim the culture of his own country, which stands apart from the English culture that was forced upon Ireland for so many years.  

Yeats’ patriotic enthusiasm flamed his mental imagination by means of Celtic legends, myths, and folklore that enriched his literary symbols, enlarged his symbolic competence and added new flavor to his symbolic system. This unique ability to diversify his symbolic sources, get many critics to regard Yeats a symbolic poet. His complicated presentation of his imagination e.g. the multi purposes his symbols denoted and the paradoxical treatment of his imagery in general resulted by the
paradoxical complications of the modern age that were reflected on the imagination of the modern romanticist, Yeats.

Yeats’ symbolism was his means to get access to the imaginary world in which everything is possible even the impossible. Yeats’ fertile imagination is clearly dominating his mind which is one of the romantic traditions that affiliates Yeats strongly to the Romantic Movement that cannot be limited to the 19th century poets.

The complex pattern of symbols, metaphors and other poetic devices, in Yeats’ poetry, as in the romantic poetry, elucidates intensity of emotions and passions, a symbiotic presentation of physicality, carnality, and spirituality, their futility or utility, if it can be said so. Emotions, therefore, take preference in Yeatsian poetic conceptualization of interpersonal relationships and of romantic love with all its shades and nuances.

Emphasis on the activity of the imagination is normally accompanied by greater emphasis on intuition, instincts and feelings. Romantics generally called for greater attention to the emotions as a necessary supplement to purely logical reason. When this emphasis was applied to the creation of poetry, a very important shift of focus occurred. Wordsworth’s definition of all good poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” marks a turning point in literary history because this definition launches a new literary era i.e. Romantic era.

Being launched by such definition, Romanticism is highly connected to the powerful feelings or emotions. In Romantic theory, good poetry should be judged first by the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings it contains and consequently delivers to the listeners and readers. Due to Wordsworth’s definition there is a close identification between the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and the good poetry. Thus, for
romantics emotions should be superior to reason and which can be read easily in Yeats’ poetry.

Meaning in poetry is created by the readers’ connection between the literal and the metaphorical while reading between the lines. At first glance, Yeats’ poetry may seem to be merely spontaneous emotions, however, after close literary analysis; it is clear that Yeats’ poetry is often fairly systematic and reveals an assortment of reoccurring ideas. When analysis of Yeats’ works is undertaken, especially when discussing Yeats’ ideas and thoughts expressed through his poetry, it is often useful to consider the context of the poems. Throughout his life, Yeats was preoccupied with the concept of the cyclic nature of history in what he presented in “gyres.” Towards the end of his life, Yeats’ works continually displayed subject matter concerned with time and change, and stages of life progressing. Yeats often drew parallels between ideas within his poems, and also, between poems. These regularly reiterated ideas are clearly uncovered when analysis is applied to Yeats’ poetry, which indeed, on first reading appears to be predominantly spontaneous emotions.

This initial impression of spontaneous emotions reveals the supremacy of emotions in Yeats’ literary productions. Such supreme emotional effect hold the readers to go deeply into these works passing by Yeats’ different devices and skills aiming at reach into the depth of the emotions aroused at the beginning. So, by means of emotion-to-emotion process, Yeats’ readers can reach their pleasure.

Yeats himself has faith in the supremacy of emotions over human beings because he believes that man is a creature swept away by conflicting emotions. He revealed this idea in his famous poem Byzantium:

All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.

For English literature the most significant expression of a Romantic commitment to emotion occurs in Wordsworth's preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), where he maintains that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." Although Wordsworth qualifies this assertion by suggesting that the poet is a reflective man who recollects his emotion in tranquility, the emphasis on spontaneity, on feeling, and the use of the term ‘overflow’ marks sharp diversions from the earlier ideals of judgment and restraint.

Searching for a fresh source of this spontaneous feeling, Wordsworth rejects the Neoclassic idea of the appropriate subject for serious verse and turns to the simplicities of rustic life because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. That interaction with nature has for many of the Romantic poets’ mystical overtones. Nature is apprehended by them not only as an exemplar and source of vivid physical beauty but as a manifestation of spirit in the universe as well. In *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth suggests that nature has gratified his physical being, excited his emotions, and ultimately allowed him "a sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused," of a spiritual force immanent not only in the forms of nature but "in the mind of man." Though not necessarily in the same terms, a similar connection between the world of nature and the world of the spirit is also made by Blake, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and the modern romantic Yeats as well.

The themes Yeats treated in his literary productions whether verse or prose show dominating emotions either floating on the surface or diving in the depth. When he describes the beauty of nature of his homeland, Ireland, he does not describe the beauty that can be perceived by the five
senses but rather the beauty that can be felt by the emotions of a patriotic citizen and when he talks about the place where he lived i.e. the tower, or describes its surroundings, he does not describe them as they are but as he feels them.

Feelings, for romanticists, are the path to comprehend the world rather than the laws of physics. Being unable to comprehend the physical laws of the world, Yeats, like Coleridge, Blake, Shelly or Keats, psychologically suffers from the falsity of reality and consequently resorts to emotions and dreams to soothe this suffering. The poem called *The Song of the Happy Shepherd* is a good example to mention here:

The woods of Arcady are dead,
And over is their antique joy;
Of old the world on dreaming fed;
Grey Truth is now her painted toy;

...My songs of old earth’s dreamy youth:
But ah! she dreams not now; dream thou!
For fair are poppies on the brow:
Dream, dream, for this is also sooth.

In the poem *The Lover Tells of the Rose in his Heart*, the burden of the physical world troubles the image, of love, that blossoms a rose in the depth of his heart that is why he desires to be transformed into a casket of his dreams:

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,
With the earth and the sky and the water, re-made, like a casket of gold
For my dreams of your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart.

Byzantium, for Yeats is, not the historical city of the Roman Empire, known for its mosaic work, god enameling, art and culture, but the country of the mind, a transcendental place outside Time and Space, a symbol for Paradise as well as Purgation. So, it is not his mind’s perception but rather his emotional one which understands the city this way.
The poem, *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death*, is a work of Irish Nationalism that discusses the role of Irish soldiers fighting for Great Britain during a time when the Irish were trying to establish independence for Ireland. Wishing to show restraint from publishing political poems during the height of the war, Yeats withheld publication of the poem until after the conflict had ended\(^2\). But the way Yeats treated this political theme is highly emotional. He narrates the story of the Irish Airman in a way gets his readers to sympathize with the speaker who foresees his death in the cloud. He is fighting people he does not hate for the benefit of those whom he does not love:

I KNOW that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love.

He seems to sacrifice his soul in vain because his death will not bring either him or his people any benefit:

My county is Kiltartan Cross,
My countrymen Kiltartan’s poor,
No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.

In his descriptive poem *The Wild Swan at Coole*, Yeats, who was attracted by the scene of the flock of fifty-nine swans, describes that scene not as it is but as he perceived it by his outpouring emotions of jealousy. The poet who is approaching the old age is jealous of the wild swans that defy the passage of time. The swans have remained unwearied and their passion is still young on the contrary of the poet and his love together with all human beings who are subjected to the passage of time:

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.
The spontaneous emotions, out of which the modern romantic poet, Yeats, creates his poetic masterpieces, are not always direct as they are in the case of the poetry of the 19th century romantic poets; but these emotions require minds acquainted with the complexities of the modern age to be perceived appropriately. Furthermore, the fact that no two can argue about is that most of Yeats’ poems, if not all, should arouse our emotions directly or indirectly and in both cases these emotions are superior to reason that turned into a medium through which these emotions should be aroused.

Yeats has an inner poise and balance that enables him to act in a cool, efficient manner during emotional trauma and stress. He maintains his perspective and objectivity about highly charged emotional issues sometimes to the chagrin of others who might wish that Yeats would react more intensely. W.B. Yeats is quietly supportive and faithful to his friends and loved ones.

In love relationships, William Butler Yeats is steadfast and loyal, especially if he has a warm, demonstrative partner. He is very sensual in nature and craves plenty of touching and physical affection. W.B. Yeats enjoys being pampered with a good meal, a loving massage or other sensual delights. He is a wonderful lover who is very attentive to the comfort and enjoyment of his loved one. William Butler Yeats responds intensely to beauty and physical appearance, and the physical attractiveness of his partner is very important to him.

Beautiful, elegant and harmonious surroundings are very important to William Butler Yeats, and he has an innate sense of style, design and form. Socially as well as good form and politeness are important to Yeats who instinctively avoids crudeness and dissonance. Additionally, he enjoys talking about love, relationships, art and the beautiful side of life. William Butler Yeats appreciates artistic people too.
He is intensely amorous and attractive to the opposite sex, and is not inclined to friendly platonic relationships. There is a great deal of tension in his love relationships; often because he puts his desires ahead of his partner's, and is impatient to have his love needs satisfied. The whole arena of love relationships, romance and sex is endlessly fascinating to William Butler Yeats and he is not happy without a love partner. Yeats can "burn himself out" by pouring so much of his energy into romance.

W.B. Yeats has deep, compelling love feelings that seem irresistible and often irrational. His love relationships are very passionate and intense, and Yeats experiences both agony and ecstasy in love. He is always profoundly changed by his love experiences, though this change may stem from painful and difficult confrontations or separations. He is somewhat emotionally fanatic about things he cares about.

In spite of his multi-relations with women like Olivia Shakespeare, Lady Augusta Gregory and his wife, Georgie Hyde Lees, which were all fulfilling in their own way, Yeats’ unrequited love for Maud Gonne was the one that dominated his mind and his poetry too. He simply could not give up on her. He kept loyal for her love for five decades. Thus, Maud’s figure overlooks and waves out of most of his poems. She inspired Yeats to use his writings as a force for national unity. He came to believe that if he could get in touch with the deep, mythic history of the Irish people, he could pull the country together with poetry. Yeats spent years writing plays about Irish nationalism for Maud Gonne to star in. Out of Gonne’s inspiration on Yeats, he wrote not only for the Irish nationalism and love, but he wrote for occult and nature as well.

The effect of Maud Gonne on Yeats’ poetic career is ultimately prodigious and clear in the large number of Yeats love poems that are scattered over his entire poetic work. The themes he treated, the style he adopted and even the images he used are not free from Maud’s effect.
Actually, Gonne’s great effect makes the influence of any other woman, even Yeats’ wife and daughter ignorable that is why Yeats spent the rest of his life chasing her love trying all his best to get her heart paying no attention to her several rejections of his several proposals to her and wrote poems to appeal to her, to describe her fascinating beauty, and to show his bitter torture caused by her attitude towards his love.

They first met on the January 30th, 1889. Yeats and his family were living in London at the time and Maud Gonne visited the household on Blenheim Road. She was tall, twenty-two years old, beautiful and an ardent Irish Nationalist. The twenty-three year old Yeats was immediately fascinated by her beauty and outspoken ways. She invited William to dinner that night - an invite he accepted. They subsequently spent the next nine evenings together and at the end of her stay in London Yeats was well and truly in love.

**Romantic Love**

Yeats wrote number of poems in which he mixes nature with love emotions and finds in nature a healing remedy and secure cottage for love dreams that are mostly threatened by the troubles of the real life. The poem called *The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart*⁶³ is a good example of this type. In this poem Yeats feels that the suffering and burden of the daily life troubles the image of his love that blossoms a rose in the depth of his heart. Consequently, he desires to escape to nature which would transform him into a golden casket for that dreamy image:

> ALL things uncomely and broken, all things worn out and old,
The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak of a lumbering cart,
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the wintry mould,
Are wronging your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart.
The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;  
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,  
With the earth and the sky and the water, re-made, like a casket of gold  
For my dreams of your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my Heart.

To an Isle in the Water is another example. In this poem, nature, symbolized by an Isle, is the only place where lovers can enjoy their love perfectly away from the eyes of others especially when the beloved is so shy like the poet’s own beloved:

SHY one, Shy one,  
Shy one of my heart,  
She moves in the firelight  
Pensively apart.  
She carries in the dishes,  
And lays them in a row.  
To an isle in the water  
With her would I go.  
With catries in the candles,  
And lights the curtained room,  
Shy in the doorway  
And shy in the gloom;  
And shy as a rabbit,  
Helpful and shy.  
To an isle in the water  
With her would I fly.

The Indian to his Love treats the same theme i.e. nature is the only place where lovers can enjoy their love either alive or dead:

THE island dreams under the dawn  
And great boughs drop tranquility;  
The peahens dance on a smooth lawn,  
A parrot sways upon a tree,  
Raging at his own image in the enamelled sea….  
How we alone of mortals are  
Hid under quiet boughs apart,  
While our love grows an Indian star,  
A meteor of the burning heart,  
One with the tide that gleams, the wings that gleam and dart,  
The heavy boughs, the burnished dove
That moans and sighs a hundred days:
How when we die our shades will rove,
When eve has hushed the feathered ways,
With vapoury footsole by the water’s drowsy blaze.

These wonderful poems, discussed above, together with many other poems are evidence of the romantic stream in the poetry of Yeats.

Some of the love poems are mere dreams of successful love like *The Song of Wandering Aengus* and *The White Birds*. In *The Song of Wandering Aengus*, the poet dreams that one day he went to a wood to celebrate the beauty of nature but suddenly he hears a voice of a glimmering girl with an apple blossom in her hair calls him and runs away\(^6\). He dreams then that he finds:

And kiss her lips and take her hands;  
And walk among long dappled grass,  
And pluck till time and times are done  
The silver apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun.

In *The White Birds*, the poet wishes to be transformed, together with his beloved, into two white birds on the wandering foam of the sea. Then they can have a chance to live together apart from the sorrow and the mortality of the real world that dooms them to live away from each other:

I WOULD that we were, my beloved, white birds on the foam of the sea!  
We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade and flee;  
And the flame of the blue star of twilight, hung low on the rim of the sky,  
Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a sadness that may not die…  
For I would we were changed to white birds on the wandering foam:  
I and you!  
I am haunted by numberless islands, and many a Danaan shore,  
Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come near us no more;  
Soon far from the rose and the lily and fret of the flames would we be,  
Were we only white birds, my beloved, buoyed out on the foam of the sea!

*He Hears the Cry of the Sedge, He Reproves the Curlew* and *He Wishes His Beloved Were Dead* are all poems overwhelmed with a vain
longing for his beloved. Yeats is a lover eager to fulfill his passion that is why every simple romantic event can raise his longing. In *He Reproves the Curlew*, for example, he appeals to the curlew not to cry anymore because the curlew’s crying is so harmful since it reminds the suffering lover of the pain of his lost passion and increases his longing:

O CURLEW, cry no more in the air,  
Or only to the water in the West;  
Because your crying brings to my mind  
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair  
That was shaken out over my breast:  
There is enough evil in the crying of wind.

*He hears the Cry of the Sedge* is one of the poems that reflect Yeats’ longing for his beloved and his eagerness to fulfill his love: the wind that cries in the siege reminds him of his unfulfilled passion and increases his solicitude and yearning which adds more to his suffering.

Where wind cries in the sedge: .......
Your breast will not lie by the breast  
Of your beloved in sleep.

He even comes to wish that his beloved were dead, in *He Wishes His Beloved Were Dead*, so as to be liberated from the shackles of reality hopping that then, i.e. after her death; she would not deprive him from enjoying love with her because she would be dead:

WERE you but lying cold and dead,  
And lights were paling out of the West,  
You would come hither, and bend your head;  
And I would lay my head on your breast;  
And you would murmur tender words,  
Forgiving me, because you were dead.

Gonne’s sudden marriage to John MacBride without any warning opens Yeats’ eyes to see the sterility of his love. He comes to feel that he has wasted his energy and time on an unfruitful passion. After his many rejected proposals and at the age of thirty-seven, Yeats, out of his frustration, comes to feel that his permanent constancy has been
estimated as old fashioned one. This conclusion has been revealed in his poem *O Do Not Love Too Long*:

But O, in a minute she changed—
O do not love too long,
Or you will grow out of fashion
Like an old song.

*No Second Troy* is another example of Yeats’ frustration to achieve a fertile love. The great mixture of feelings in this poem shows Yeats’ own ambiguity in his emotions towards Gonne. There are traces of reproach, admiration, jealousy and forgiveness, reflecting his real relationship with the woman herself.

This emotional turbulence is understandable when one realizes that despite several rejections of his marriage proposals, Yeats remained infatuated with Maud Gonne all his life. He always praised her ardent nature even when he blamed it for keeping them apart:

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind (*No Second Troy*)

For Yeats, Gonne is a new Helen but the problem is that she could not cause another Trojan war in that changed circumstances. In the changed circumstances she could only fill the poet’s days with misery:

That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

Yeats, however, expresses his pure love for Gonne by celebrating both her beauty and the sweet memories with her. Poems like *He Thinks of Those Who Have Spoken Evil of his Beloved*, *He Tells of the Perfect Beauty*, and *He Tells of a Valley Full of Lovers* celebrate Gonne’s beauty
that flames the fire of love in Yeats’ heart. Poems like *A Memory of Youth*, *Fallen Majesty*, *Friends*, *That the Night Come*, *Memory*, *Her Praise*, *The People*, *His Phoenix*, *A Thought from Propertius*, *Broken Dreams*, *A Deep-Sworn Vow* and *Presences* celebrate the past sweet memories with Gonne. What give these poems a convincing tone are the small details and memories of conversations and scenes. Actually these poems are the honest mirrors of a man who gave all his heart and lost it. But none of them matches the wildly passionate outcry of the poem called *The Cold Heaven* which is metaphysical in its mixture of blood and spirit:

SUDDENLY I saw the cold and rook-delighting heaven
That seemed as though ice burned and was but the more ice,
And thereupon imagination and heart were driven
So wild that every casual thought of that and this
Vanished, and left but memories, that should be out of season.

The burning passions of youth “balanced against the freezing naked soul of a dead old man”, that will be burned by cold skies. Unfairly his soul has been punished for his failure in love which he is not responsible for:

With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;
And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro,
Riddled with light. Ah! when the ghost begins to quicken,
Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent
Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken
By the injustice of the skies for punishment?

The poem, at the deeper level reveals Yeats’ abundant love for Maud Gonne in spite of the limitless pain inflicted by this love.

The older Yeats grows the more regretful for his lost love he becomes. What guide us to this truth are the love-poems he wrote under the heading of *A Man Young and Old* which he wrote in 1926 when approaching the old age. These poems are autobiographical poems reflect the amount of
regret, the old lover feels, for love and youth. In *First Love* he confesses his falsity when he thinks that his beloved has a heart of flesh and blood because the failure of his many attempts to gain her love gets him to conclude the stony nature of her heart:

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.... I thought her body bore
A heart of flesh and blood.

But since I laid a hand thereon
And found a heart of stone
I have attempted many things
And not a thing is done.
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Not only is Gonne’s heart stony, but Yeats himself becomes senseless too. In *Human Dignity* the bitterness of his beloved transforms him into a senseless bit stone and a dumb from human dignity:

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So like a bit of stone I lie
Under a broken tree.
I could recover if I shrieked
My heart’s agony
To passing bird, but I am dumb
From human dignity.
```

The image of the senseless stone is also used in *His Wildness* where frustration leaves him alone doing nothing but nursing a stone:

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For that is natural to a man
That lives in memory,
Being all alone I’d nurse a stone
And sing it lullaby.
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Remembering the friends of his youth, in *The Friends of his Youth*, Yeats cannot neglect her i. e. Maud Gonne who is given a satirical picture of a woman wrapping up a stone as if it were a child. As a cheater she gets the speaker to laugh hysterically because the cry of Peter, one of his old friends who turns mad and used to crow as a peacock, is either love or pride. Yeats uses the character of Peter to show his misery that is caused by his love being fended off by Gonne’s pride:

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For that old Madge comes down the lane,
A stone upon her breast,
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And a cloak wrapped about the stone…
And Peter that had great affairs
And was a pushing man
Shrieks, ‘I am King of the Peacocks,’
And perches on a stone;
And then I laugh till tears run down
And the heart thumps at my side,
Remembering that her shriek was love
And that he shrieks from pride.

Thus, the ageing body of the deprived lover, i.e. Yeats, increases his yearning to fulfill his love and his sorrow for both his lost youth and lost love as well.

Though both Yeats and Gonne believed that they are spiritually married, this partly love is not sufficient for Yeats who spent around fifty years reluctantly yearning and waiting to fulfill the physical part of this partial love.

Yeats wrote many poems which refer to his longing to enjoy his love physically but he seems to concentrate on the physical elements in love mostly in the series of poems he wrote under the heading of *A Woman Young and Old*. Poems like *A Last Confession*, *Consolation* and *Parting* also emphasize the physical elements of love. “This emphasis is blended with ideas from *A Vision* in the poems called *Before the World was Made*, *A First Confession*, *Her Triumph*, and *Chosen*”⁶⁷.

In his *A Last Confession*, Yeats confesses that the soul can be touched only through body because body is the means through which the spiritual dimension of love can be manifested:

But had great pleasure with a lad
That I loved bodily.

Flinging from his arms I laughed
To think his passion such
He fancied that I gave a soul
Did but our bodies touch,
And laughed upon his breast to think
Beast gave beast as much.
In *Consolation*, some physical elements in love can be traced. In this poem Yeats provides a logical point of view to prove the importance of the physical love, i.e. love, which is the cause of our birth:

> How could passion run so deep  
> Had I never thought  
> That the crime of being born  
> Blackens all our lot?  
> But where the crime’s committed  
> The crime can be forgot.

Some physical elements of love can also be traced in the conversation poem called *Parting*. In this poem the poet says goodbye to his love because of the coming of the daylight; but his love tries to convince him to stay more for the light is not the daylight; it is the moon’s and the bird is not a dawn bird; it is a night bird that comes to bring rest to lovers and its song is just to reprove the murderous stealth of the day i.e. the day is a thief stealing the night from the lovers:

> She. No, night’s bird and love’s  
> Bids all true lovers rest,  
> While his loud song reproves  
> The murderous stealth of day  
> He. Daylight already flies  
> From mountain crest to crest  

> She. That light is from the moon.

*Leda and the Swan*, the most famous and perfect poem by Yeats, is another example to discuss here. One of the ways to read this poem is as Yeasts’ own particular rape fantasy, in which Maud Gonne is Leda and Yeats himself the swan; and in displacing his frustrations into the poem, Yeats turns destructive impulses into a constructive thing of beauty. The poem is a psychological therapy for Yeats who cannot enjoy the physical love with his love, Maud Gonne. It is also possible that Yeats tries to shape his hidden desire in this poem. If Yeats’ desire to have a physical contact with Gonne has been fulfilled the whole world would have been changed.
Leda and the Swan is a violent, sexually explicit poem that has all of the lyricism and complexity of Yeats’ later work, with its plain diction, rhythmic vigor, and allusions to mystical ideas about the universe, the relationship of human and divine, and the cycles of history. It can be seen as a poem about the way a single event is to be understood as part of a larger scheme; the result of the god’s assault on Leda is the birth of Helen of Troy, the subsequent destruction of early Greek civilization, and the beginning of the modern era:

A SUDDEN blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?
A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

This poem epitomizes Yeats’ poetic incorporation of Greek mythology and sensual imagery to underscore the richness of sexual and linguistic beauty structured in the loaded metaphors, symbols and images. Semantic possibilities, nevertheless, transcend the apparent ones.

The sensual love Yeats was eager to fulfill can be clarified obviously by the seven poems of Crazy Jane that show her earthly sensuality i.e. Crazy Jane and the Bishop, Crazy Jane Reproved, Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment, Crazy Jane and the Journeyman, Crazy Jane on God, Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop, and Crazy Jane Crown Old Looks at the Dancers.

Crazy Jane, the speaker in these poems is a real woman as Yeats himself states in a letter to Mrs. Shakespeare: “Crazy Jane is more or less
founded on an old woman who lives in a cottage near Gort. She loves her flower garden. She has just sent Lady Gregory some flowers in spite of the season and has amazing powers of acidulous speech….She is the local satirist and a really terrible one”.

What distinguishes the seven poems of crazy Jane and gives them a special significance to be discussed separately is that these poems deal mainly with the sensual part of love rather than its physical elements. Through these seven poems: Yeats, on the tongue of Crazy Jane, vigorously advocates the sensual love regardless all the surrounding limits especially religious limits. Yeats successfully manages to employ Jane’s character bilaterally i.e. to express both his crazy desire for sensual fulfillment and the way he wants his beloved to respond to this deadly desire. Yeats skillfully manages to manipulate this character so as to play two roles i.e. to reveal his right to fulfill his sensual desire regardless ageing and religion limits and to give Maud Gonne a role model to follow e.g. in Crazy Jane and the Bishop, Crazy Jane confesses proudly her sexual affairs:

Jack had my virginity,
And bids me to the oak,
And in Crazy Jane on God Crazy Jane does the same
showing off:
I had wild Jack for a lover;
Though like a road
That men pass over
My body makes no moan
But sings on:
All things remain in God.

In Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment, Yeats seems to send messages, on the tongue of Jane, to Maud Gonne about the unity of soul and body in love and the satisfaction of love through this unity:

‘LOVE is all
Unsatisfied
That cannot take the whole
Body and soul’;
And that is what Jane said…
‘Naked I lay,
The grass my bed;
Naked and hidden away,
That black day’;
And that is what Jane said.

‘What can be shown?
What true love be?
All could be known or shown
If Time were but gone.’
‘That’s certainly the case,’ said he.

And after growing old Crazy Jane meets a bishop, *Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop*, who starts reproaching her for her past sensual life asking her to give up that life for heaven, but she defends herself and her deeds stating that fair and foul are close because fair is fair only when contrasted to foul. She thinks that, regardless the bishop’s religious point of view, what she did is an actual truth cannot be denied:

‘Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul,’ I cried.
‘My friends are gone, but that’s a truth
Nor grave nor bed denied,
Learned in bodily lowliness
And in the heart’s pride.

‘A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent;
But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent.’

For Yeats, the connection between sexuality and mortality lies deeper than their significance in his poetry. In both the relationship is characterized simultaneously by attraction and repulsion. The disgust that Yeats felt about his bodily decomposition in old age was similarly endured in youth in reference to his budding sexuality. He describes his experience, beginning near age fifteen, of being constantly burdened by the tortures of unfulfilled sexual desire. In *Memoirs*, written between
1916 and 1917, Yeats described his relationship to his own sexuality and asserted that it was “a continual struggle against an experience that almost invariably left me with exhausted nerves”\textsuperscript{70}. Although his sensual encounters were infrequent; they were typically were adverse experiences that left him with a feeling of self-loathing. In \textit{Sailing to Byzantium}, it becomes clear that this discomfort with sexuality is reflected in the poem. In the land of sensually charged youth, there is a distinct coldness and the speaker reveals feeling unwelcomed in Ireland. He longs to exist in a place of wisdom, devoid of sex, where he may once again feel at ease. The sensual music of youth is depicted negatively in that it disregards wisdom in favor of bodily pleasure\textsuperscript{71}:

\begin{quote}
Caught in the sensual music all neglect
monuments of unageing intellect.
\end{quote}

This section is opposite to the previous one since it will study the spiritual love in the poetry of Yeats. This type of love can be traced in the seven poems which celebrate the idealistic love of a Romeo-and-Juliet pair of innocents in the volume called \textit{Words for Music Perhaps}. This love is the love Yeats forced to accept as result of Gonne’s frequent refusal for any physical union with him.

These poems celebrate the spiritual agony and pleasure of love. In \textit{Love’s Loneliness}, the theme is heart-break and love’s desolation. The atmosphere is completely romantic where the moon’s thin horn is there above the mountain which throws shadow on the lovers whose hearts are bitterly torn:

\begin{quote}
The mountain throws a shadow,  
Thin is the moon’s horn;  
What did we remember  
Under the ragged thorn?  
Dread has followed longing,  
And our hearts are torn.
\end{quote}
The two lovers will find comfort in *Her Dreams*, “which associates the girl with the legend of Berenice whose hair, sacrificed for the safe return of her husband, had been immortalized in legend and astronomy”:

I DREAMED as in my bed I lay,  
All night’s fathomless wisdom come,  
That I had shorn my locks away  
And laid them on Love’s lettered tomb:  
But something bore them out of sight  
In a great tumult of the air,  
And after nailed upon the night  
Berenice’s burning hair.

The seven girl-and-lover poems and the Crazy Jane poems are extreme opposites. Each of the two groups represents a partial love that lacks the benefit of the other i.e. girl-and-lover poems lack the physical side of love whereas the poems of Crazy Jane lack the spiritual side of it. However, still there are poems that deal with two parts of love together which need to be discussed here.

This special experience Yeats gets appears in the way he presents the types of pleasure a woman can get from love. This seems to be an attempt to convince his beloved of the importance of both the physical and the spiritual parts of love when they are satisfied together. In the poem called *Three Things* he points out three pleasures: firstly: the satisfaction she gets and gives in offering a child her breast:

‘A child found all a child can lack,  
Whether of pleasure or of rest,  
Upon the abundance of my breast’.

Second: the satisfaction she gets and gives in offering her body to her lover:

‘A man if I but held him so  
When my body was alive  
Found all the pleasure that life gave’.

Thirdly: the satisfaction she gets from deceiving her husband and yawning in his face after having spent a night with a lover:

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'The third thing that I think of yet,'
Sang a bone upon the shore,
‘Is that morning when I met
Face to face my rightful man
And did after stretch and yawn’.

In the *Three Bushes* and the related lyrics that follow, Yeats throws a different light on the unity of body and soul in love. In this poem a lady substitutes her maid for herself in the lover’s bed at night out of her fear that by sleeping with her lover she would be degrading her love for him; but when the lover is accidently killed, the lady dies as well, and the maid comes to recognize that her love is also genuine though she was a cheater. When the maid dies she was buried near the tombs of the master and the lady. The idea is that the maid’s physical love and the lady’s spiritual love are both genuine and these two parts of love guide the lover to rest:

‘So you must lie beside him
And let him think me there.
And maybe we are all the same
Where no candles are,
And maybe we are all the same
That stip the body bare.’
O my dear, O my dear.

Yeats here may refer to his love story with Gonne who deprives him her body and gets him to sleep with another woman to satisfy his love.

As it is clear now that the supremacy of emotions is one of the common features in the poetic productions of Yeats in spite of the wide scope his poetry has and the different stages this poetry stand for. This fact links Yeats to Romanticism and affiliates him, as a pioneer poet, to the Modern Romantic Movement in which nature is worshipped; individuality is superior to society; imagination is superior to reality; and emotions are superior to reason; but the way these romantic traditions treated and handled by Yeats is modern. Yeatsian poetic production on the whole, thus, stands as unerringly engaging poetic discourse that encompasses central issues which signify the modern and postmodern literary and intellectual discourses but which, distinctly, are rooted in the basic premises of romanticism.
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