CHAPTER - I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO W.B. YEATS
The age of Yeats is rich in poetry from the viewpoints of both matter and manner as the following brief historical survey of the English poetry will reveal.

During the 1890's an effort was made to keep alive the tradition of the Pre-Raphaelite poets of Swinburne, Morris and Rossetti. The poets of this period sought to imitate the overcloying sweetness and luxuriousness of their predecessors. They sought to escape from the world of machinery, industry and banal morality to the world of art. They followed the gospel of art for art's sake. Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and Arthur Symons are the representative decadent poets.

Another current of poetry which flew between 1880 and 1890 may be termed as Realistic Poetry when compared to the Pre-Raphaelites and the Decadents. William Ernest Henley, Rudyard Kipling and Wilfrid S. Blunt are the representative poets of this current. But chief among them is Kipling. Kipling wrote on soldiers and sailors and on imperialism too. Poetry of these poets has little or no metaphysical interest.

The two great pessimistic poets of the nineties are Thomas Hardy and A.E. Housman. They kept alive the spirit of questioning about sense and outward things and gave a jolt to the feeling of self-complacency and cheap-optimism of the Victorians. Their poetry is the final expression
of the disillusionment which had been at work ever since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hardy tells of tragic irony, of frustrated love, of passion followed by disillusion, misery by deceit, of a teasing woman who provokes tragedy, of lost faith. Hardy writes in harsh, prosaic diction and simple, often, stark metre. A.E. Housman deals in his poetry with primitive themes in musical language, with a sweetness broken by irony and the tang of cruel disillusion. Music comes to him under the stress of emotion, but it is controlled by his scholarly sense of metre. The three themes which attract him are soldiership, love and the gallows. His style is bleak and classical.

Robert Bridges, who succeeded Alfred Austin as a Poet Laureate, in 1913, has to his credit quite an appreciable body of poetry most of which is of a high quality. An atmosphere of tranquility spreads over his work. Bridges shines as poet of nature also.

William Butler Yeats was at the centre of the Irish Literary Movement and was indispensable to its existence. He was a poet and a dramatist and all his creative work was marked with fine poetic touches. He was in the field of poetry for nearly fifty years and in these fifty years he evolved from a dreamer to a realist and from a realist to a passionate metaphysical seer. Thought and passion drove him all his life. He was a poet all the time and a great poet.
The other notable transitional poets were Gordon Bottomley and Francis Thompson. Bottomley wrote romantic poems with a marked influence of Rossetti. His poems are also remarkable for their images, visibility and sound effects. William Watson, another poet, also helped in bringing about a transition in poetry.

Georgian poetry covers the period from 1910 to 1922 when George V was the King presiding over the destinies of the British empire. The poetry of this period was issued in five volumes, dated respectively 1911-12, 1913-1915, 1916-17, 1918-19 and 1920-22, edited by Sir Edward March who died in 1953. The poets who figured prominently in these volumes were Lescelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Rupert Brooke, G.K.Chesterton, W.H. Davies, Walter De La Mare, John Drinkwater, James Elroy Flecker, W.W. Gibson, D.H. Lawrence, John Masefield, Harold Monro, T.S.Moore, Ronald Ross, W.J. Turner, J.C. Squire, Siegfried Sassoon, J.Rosenberg, Robert Nicholas, Robert Graves, John Freeman Maurice Baring, Edward Shanks, Edmund Blunden and Martin Armstrong. The main positive aim of the Georgian poets was to treat natural things in a clear, natural and beautiful way, "neither too modern nor too like Tennyson". Their subjects were to be, "nature, love, leisure, old age, childhood, animals, sleep, unemotional subjects." These poets wrote extremely neat and melodious poems about sheep, bulls and other domestic or wild animals. They also celebrated in pleasing verse the charm of various localities in
the British Isles. Quietly they longed for the good old days and ways. But soon there was a reaction against the Georgian poets because they were merely writing nice poetry for nice people and that they were too inclined to indulge in mutual praise. The Georgian poets were escapists for the most part, their work shows little awareness of the industrial world around them. In the years immediately preceding the First World War, there emerged a few poets who started a reaction against Georgian poetry which they criticised as facile and loose-appealing to the general public. These reactionaries called themselves Imagists and they kept before them the object of representing real life in images that were clear, precise and exact. The leader of this school was T.E. Hulme. The Imagists aimed at hard, clear, brilliant effects instead of the soft, dreamy vagueness or the hollow Miltonic rhetoric of the English 19th century tradition. They aimed at the clarity and concentration of the classic Chinese lyric and the Greek epigram. For the expression of their thoughts they evoked new rhythms and laid particular emphasis on verse libre. The Imagists wanted to create a very precise and concentrated expression of a new sort of consciousness for which the traditional techniques were inadequate and naturally they made experiments in verse libre which provided them unlimited freedom of free expression. Hulme's leadership was followed in America and Hilda Doolittle and Ezra Pound adopted the new technique which Pound characterized as Imagism. The Imagists brought out a magazine The Egoist and later on published three volumes of Imagist poetry and published an anthology of Imagist Poetry
called Des Imagistes in 1914. The main contributors were F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington, F.M. Hulffer, Amy Lowell and D.H. Lawrence.

The Great World War of 1914-1918 exercised a considerable influence on English poetry of the Georgian period. The poetry produced by the war was not all of a single note. While we hear laudatory verses coming out from elder poets, who stayed at home, we are shocked by the note of cynicism, satire and realism struck by poets who had actually been to the warfield and had witnessed the horrors of warfare. Those who wrote gloriously for war and patriotism, of sacrifice and victory, were the elder poets: Kipling, Freeman, Hardy, Lawrence and Bunyan. William Butler Yeats, however, remained unaffected by this war. These poets sang of the nobility of self-sacrifice and the sublimity of patriotism. They regarded war as a call to duty and a time of trial for the nation. Hardy and Alice Meynell, Bridges and John Masefield were also moved to write about the War to a lesser extent. But it was the young soldier-poet Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) who gave expression to the fervent hopes of the people for the war in his sonnets, particularly the Soldier, which has been regarded as a masterpiece of patriotic poetry. Another great soldier poet was Siegfried Sassoon. Robert Graves, Robert Nicholas, Wilfred Owen, Julian Grenfell and Edmund Blunden also wrote poetry on the War during the years of the First World War.
English poetry between 1920 and 1930 presents a fine spectacle of old traditional poets moving steadily by the side of the younger generation of the poets. Tradition and experiment go hand in hand during this period. From the points of view of both variety and number, the output of these poets is quite heavy - Hardy, Bridges, Davies, Dela Mare, Housman, Gibson, Masefield and Bottomley. Though Georgian poetry ceased to appear after 1922, many of its poets such as Drinkwater, Shanks, W.J. Turner and their leader J.C. Squire were still holding the stage. The new poets who had not yet opened their accounts in the field of literature were gradually gaining prominence and among the new adventurers in the realm of poetry were T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell. Richard Church, Herbert Palmer, Humbert Wolfe and Roy Campbell were other prominent figures among the young generation of new poets. At the end of the decade there appeared the new constellation of Auden, Spender, Cecil Day Lewis and Mac Neice. The two great poets of this decade were undoubtedly T.S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell and these two poets revolutionised the whole concept of poetry by their startling innovations in matter and new experiments in metre, diction and rhyme.

The poetry of England between 1930 and 1940 was dominated by a set of poets - Auden, Spender, Cecil Day Lewis and Louis Mac Neice who made poetry a matter of revolutionary and dynamic thinking rather than allowing it dalliance with pastoral beauties. The poets of this period
were intensely interested in modern life and were bent upon harnessing all phases of modern life and knowledge in their works. They were interested in politics and were communist in their outlook. Unmindful of their future in the realm of poetry, they went on preaching revolutionary communist views for the regeneration of the decadent society of their times. The poets of this school were considerably influenced in their technique by Imagist poets, Symbolists of France and innovations of Hopkins and T.S. Eliot. They used slang, jazzy metres and imagery derived from machinery and boys' stories. Their poetry often gives the impression of being written in a sort of private family language and of being addressed rather self-consciously and exclusively to be initiated. They have made poetry more intellectual than emotional.

But W.B. Yeats, like T.S. Eliot, is a school by himself, a mini-assimilation of many a trend of modern poetry. He stands as a bridge between the pre-Raphaelites and the Decadents on the one hand and between the Decadents and the moderns on the other. He begins to write right from the eighteen-nineties and goes on to write till the beginning of the Second World War (1939). Yeats's output and literary period, his contribution and his experiments are of great literary significance.
(B) The Literary and Social Background of Yeats's Poetry:

The Irish Literary movement was one of the most remarkable manifestations of the romantic revival of the late nineteenth century and W.B. Yeats was the leader of the movement and its greatest figure. The early poetry of Yeats is steeped in the spirit of the rich mystic mythology of the Celtic race. But very soon Yeats evolved into a modern poet.

As a reaction to the verbal imprecision and lushness of the Romantics emerged the Imagist Movement. Their leaders were T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound. The movement was international but it proved to be short-lived. Yeats was one of the several poets who was influenced by this new attitude. However, he never lost interest in or contact with the Anglo-Irish culture in which he had been brought up. He never passively reflected any new movement that arose. The change in Yeats is attributable only partly to the influence of Ezra Pound and his friends.

Yeats worked out his poetic salvation in his own way and he never lost the compelling individuality of his accent. It was not Ezra Pound and his Imagist school but Dublin literary circle that sent him to Standish O'Grady's History of Ireland, Heroic Period where he found the great stories of the heroic age of Irish history. The Irish
revolution gave Yeats food for thought. Even before meeting Ezra Pound in London, Yeats had come a long way. The fact is that Yeats's poetic imagination was nurtured by various factors. From London Yeats got some vague pre-Raphaelite notions and some knowledge of the French Symbolists; from Sligo and Rosses he got earthiness and folk-love and a racy dialect; from Dublin, especially in the 'lull in politics' that followed the death of Parnell, he got the sense of belonging to a national literary movement. Thus, we see that the social and literary milieu of the time led to the flowering of Yeats's poetic genius.

(C) W.B. YEATS: HIS LIFE AND WORKS:-

William Butler Yeats was born near Dublin in 1865. He was the eldest son of John Butler Yeats. His father and brothers were painters and Yeats himself studied art for a time. John Yeats wanted his son to enter the Church of Ireland but the younger Yeats was destined to become an artist - a great poet and a playwright of repute. Yeats, who became a member of the poetic set in London in the 1890's, was a keen worker in the Renaissance of the Irish theatre in the 1900's and returned for a while to literary London before the First World War. By 1925 he was widely recognized as a major poet and was still developing. He was also a member of the Irish Senate and a 'public man' (his own words) of Ireland. He died in France in 1939.
Yeats - Principal Poetic works:

The poems written by Yeats appeared in the following thirteen successive volumes with the year of publication given in each case within brackets:

1. The Juvenilia (1885)
2. The Crossways (1889)
3. The Rose (1893)
4. The Wind Among the Reeds (1899)
5. In the Seven Woods (1904)
6. The Green Helmet and Other Poems (1910)
7. Responsibilities (1914)
8. The Wild Swans at Coole (1919)
9. Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921)
10. The Tower (1928)
11. The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933)
12. A Full Moon in March (1935)
13. Last Poems (published posthumously)

(D) THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES BEHIND YEATS'S WORK:

Yeats's life and works were influenced by a number of personalities who inspired many of his poems and were later converted into the types and figures in his personal mythology. The earliest and
in many ways, the most influential figure in this respect was his own father John Butler Yeats, who was his first mentor and guide and his life-long critic, adviser and sharer in his fortunes. Himself a pre-Raphaelite painter of losing integrity and devotion to art and literature, averse to money and material consideration, he kept the flame of art and culture burning amid poverty and nagging cares of daily life. He initiated his son into the mysteries of literature, reading aloud the most passionate passages out of Shakespeare, with due expositions of the greatness of Sir Walter Scott and Balzac. He dinned into the ears of his gifted son certain dicta concerning art and poetry which his son came to appreciate only in the days of his maturity and psychological crisis. We may reproduce a few samples of his aristocratic creed. He wrote in 1869 to his friend Professor Edward Dowden:

"It seems to me that the intellect of man is man, and therefore of an artist, the most human of all, should obey no voice except that of emotion, but I should have a man know all emotions ... Art has to do with the sustaining and invigorating of the Personality. To be strong is to be happy. Art by expressing our feelings makes us strong and therefore happy. In the completely emotional man the least awakening of feeling is a harmony in which every chord of every feeling vibrates. Excitement is the feature of an insufficiently emotional nature". [J.B. Yeats: Letters, P. 48].
Here we have, in a nutshell, what W.B. Yeats later described as the 'unity of Being' and which he sought to attain all his life. Then take another seminal remark:

"Art is solitary man, the man as he is behind the innermost, the utmost veils. That is why with the true poet we do not care what are his persuasions, opinions, ideas, religions, moralities -- Through all these we can pierce to the voice of the essential man if we have the discerning senses. These are no more than the leafy wood out of which the nightingale sings" (J.B. Yeats: Letters, P. 193).

"All art is reaction from life but never, when it is vital and great, an escape". (Ibid., P. 144).

With all his emphasis on the presence of the artist's personality in his work, J.B. Yeats was all for drama and did not care even for a fine lyrical passage because to him personal utterance was an egoism. J.B. Yeats hated abstraction and generalization in poetry where all the emphasis must fall on the concrete, the vivid and the vital. He was professedly an atheist which his instinctively religious son came to dislike and so the son began to drift apart from his imperious father and the latter in his old age settled in America and refused to return home. But he watched attentively and with deep interest the progress of his poetic son and never failed to advise, warn and admonish him for any deviation from the right path in art or in life.
Looking back to his early days of preparation under the tutelage of his father Yeats referred to his ideal of poetic style:

"We should write out our own thoughts in as nearly as possible the language we thought them in, as though in a letter to an intimate friend. We should not disguise them in any way ... personal utterance, which had almost ceased in English literature could be as fine an escape from rhetoric and abstraction as drama itself". (The Autobiographies : P. 103).

"It was many years before I understood that I had surrendered myself to the chief temptation of the artist, creation without toil. Metrical composition is always very difficult to me, nothing is done upon the first day, not one rhyme is in its place; and when at last the rhymes begin to come the first rough draft of a six-line stanza takes the whole day". (Ibid., P. 122).

The next figure who dominated Yeats's youth and left a lasting impression on him was the old Fenian John O'Leary. It was about 1890 that Yeats met John O'Leary, a devoted Irish nationalist, patriot, fighter and champion of the Irish cause. He proved to be a guiding force in the young poet's life. It was through him that Yeats became acquainted with the works of the nationalist poets like Davis and Mangan and became their devoted admirer. He joined the Young Ireland
Society and its debates inspired him with a patriotic urge and he devoted himself to the task of recreating the past of Ireland and reviving the pride of the Irish in their own culture. Even his subject matter became Irish. He not only drew symbols and images from Ireland's past but also wrote on contemporary Irish political scene. Sometimes he did so out of John O'Leary's influence, sometimes out of his natural love for Ireland but at times to impress Maud Gonne.

We may now pass on to the female figures who crossed his life at crucial points and influenced his life and his poetry alike. First among them is certainly Maud Gonne, whose flaming beauty bewitched the young poet at first sight and held him enthralled for more than 25 years till his marriage late in life exorcised, partly at least, her demonic spell. She knocked at the door of his family-house on January 30, 1889 and at once impressed all the young inmates by her tall stature, majestic gait and ruddy face. Yeats cherished the lovely image in his mind and reproduced it twelve years afterwards in the following verses:

"I thought of your beauty, and this arrow,
Made out of a wild thought, is in my marrow

.........
There's no man may look upon her, no man,
As when newly grown to be a woman
Tall and noble but with face and bosom
Delicate in colour as apple blossom".
She was a fiery patriot out to liberate Ireland even by fomenting violence and revolution and though she shared many of Yeats's ideals and pre-occupations, she instinctively preferred a man of action, a heroic soul, to a dreamer with genuine poetic gifts. She failed to convert Yeats to her extremist views but her beauty and her passionate idealism fascinated him throughout his life and were the inspiration of much of his poetry.

The second woman, who played an important part in the development of Yeats's genius was Olivia Shakespeare, a young married woman of sensitive heart and literary pretensions, who fell violently in love with the young poet and though their proposed elopement fell through, their romance continued for about a year. They remained life-long friends, shared literary interests with each other and participated in each other's fortunes. The letters that Yeats wrote to this sympathetic and generous-hearted lady are among his best and most significant. "The affair with Olivia Shakespeare (whom he called Diana Vernon in his "Memoirs"), although lasting only about a year, was one of deep feeling and afterwards passed into a nostalgic friendship. Writing to her in 1926 he said that he looked back to his "youth as to a cup that a mad man dying of thirst left half tasted", and again in 1933, "yet do I write to you as to my own past". In 1934, writing of his work, on what was to become Dramatis Personae, he said sadly that "the most significant image of those years (hers) must be left out".  

The news of her death saddened the old poet profoundly.

The third woman was Lady Augusta Gregory who functioned as his guardian-angel, a noble scion of Coole Park who was closely associated with Yeats in his national labours of reviving the old mythology, sagas and folk-lore in order to glorify the nobility and dignity of the Irish people; she was also his trusted and most useful associate in the venture which led to the founding of the Abbey Theatre. Above all, her great house, Coole Park was the never failing asylum and nursing home for the shattered verses of the over-worked and over-strained poet, where a motherly care was taken to shield him from the least possible disturbance. Coole Park, in course of time, became to the poet a living image of the old aristocratic houses and courts where poets were honoured and rewarded, where courtesy, wit, conversation and ceremony found their cradle; whose life appeared to be large, spacious, leisurely and full of ease and illumination. She appreciated his poetry and acted as his noble patron and Yeats gave expression to his gratitude to her during her illness in one of his manuscript books: "I cannot realize the world without her. She has been to me mother, friend, sister and brother. She brought to my wavering thoughts steadfast nobility - all day the thought of losing her is a conflagration in the rafters".

In his old age Yeats found in Lady Dorothy Wellesley an equally congenial friend.
Lady Gregory's only son, Major Robert Gregory, who died in air-crash during the closing year of the First World War, inspired two of Yeats's best poems of his maturity, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" and "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory".

Another young man, Hugh Lane, Lady Gregory's nephew inspired some of the bitterest verses of Yeats, who took an active interest, on his side, in the controversy that arose out of the problem of housing his collection of modern French pictures. Lane became the hero of a series of moving verses entitled Poems Written in Discouragement.

But the man who proved to be a boon for the Abbey Theatre was John Synge. Synge, the proud lonely man, who suffered silently and unperturbed, all the slights of the ignorant and the bigoted, became for Yeats a symbol of the modern artist, poor, sickly and unhonoured, who assumed the heroic mask to face the hostile world. He became a valued image in his private mythology.

(E) YEATS AND MAGIC (OCCULTISM):

By 'Magic' Yeats meant the whole area of occult knowledge.

In his essay on 'Magic' he has explained the meaning of magic and specified the fundamental articles of his new faith. The opening paragraph puts the whole thing in a nutshell:
"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 depth of the mind when the eyes are closed; and I believe in three doctrines, which have, 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 mind 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 memory 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".

The roots of the idea of occultism lie far back in the symbolist doctrines which Yeats had learnt from Arthur Symons in the eighteen-nineties:

I find in an old diary: "I think all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other life, on a rebirth as something not one's self, something created in a moment and perpetually

renewed .... If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves ... Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask".¹

Yeats became a staunch advocate of the occult and the spiritual. He had a number of visions. Later on, his wife, Georgie Hyde Lees, too shared the similar belief about occultism and mysteries of the spirit. Yeats put credence into the mysterious happenings. Ultimately, he evolved his philosophy and outlined it in A Vision, published in 1925; it was re-written and the final draft was completed in 1937.

"A Vision presents his philosophy of history, humankind and life after death. What the 'Unknown Instructors' who spoke through Mrs. Yeats told him was a literalization of his own thoughts and beliefs; the classification or historical periods of men and women according to a scheme symbolized by the twenty-eight phases of the moon and the working of the gyres in history. History becomes a symbol of anti-thetical movements diagrammatized by the gyre or spiral, traced round an imaginary core from apex to base; when the base is reached and the gyre is at its widest, the civilization collapses in a violent

reversal and the new gyre begins again at the narrow apex of the cone”. In A Vision, Yeats sets out in detail and with much technical language what happens to the dead: the soul endures an elaborate purgatory in which it purifies away in thought the events of its past life until it is ready to be born again.

His father's atheism accentuated this native tendency of Yeats and when his friend and political guide, John O'Leary, deprecated this dabbling into magic and occultism, Yeats replied to his protest, in July 1892, in the following words:

"If I had not made magic my constant study, I could not have written a single word of my Blake book, nor would The Countess Cathleen ever have come to exist. The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write. It holds to my work the same relation that the philosophy of Godwin holds to the work of Shelley and I have always considered myself a voice of what I believe to be a greater renascence - the revolt of the soul against the intellect - now beginning in the world".

Richard Ellmann has rightly stated that the atmosphere of the period, through which young Yeats was passing, was charged with the magical and the occult practices and experiments and repeated emphasis

was being laid upon the fundamental affinity between poetry and magic.

"For writers and artists the attraction of magic during the 'eighties' and 'nineties' was significantly strong. 'Artist, you are a magician; Art is the great miracle, it alone proves our immortality', wrote the renowned French magician, the Sar Peladan ... Magic offered to the symbolists, many of whom studied it, a reinforcement of their belief in the power of word or symbol to evoke a reality otherwise inaccessible. "Every true poet is instinctively an initiate, the reading of grimoires awakens secrets in him which he had always virtually known: wrote Charles Morice about the literature of the Fin de Siecle. The feeling of alienation from society, which beset so many artists of this time, caused them to seek spiritual citizenship elsewhere.... As the magician Stanislas Guaita put it, in the preface to his book of poems, Rosa Mystica, in 1885: 'Mysticism? It is the love of our hearts for the dream of our brains; it is what makes the vulgar hate us, what makes us into outlaw'. The extreme example is Villiers de l'Isle Adam's Rosicrucian play, Axel (a favourite with Yeats) where hero and heroine both of them magicians, seek complete isolation from life, and, to secure it, commit suicide".  

   Pp. 91-92.
Yeats's adventures in magic and occultism can be given chronologically but briefly. On June 16, 1885, Yeats, a student of the Metropolitan Art School in Dublin, founded, in collaboration with his congenial friends, George Russell and Charles Johnston, the Dublin Hermetic Society. In May 1887, Yeats called on Madame Blavatsky in London and was admitted to the membership of the London Theosophical Society and joined its Esoteric section in 1888 and in August 1890, he was asked to resign for his excessive curiosity. On March 7, 1890, he became a member of Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn, which was founded in 1888, a year after the foundation of Theosophical Lodge and had many points in common with it. The dominant figure in this organisation was Mac-Gregor Mathers, a staunch Celt of romantic personality, deeply read in the secret lore of Kaballah. Yeats was chiefly attracted by its ritual of initiation and the freedom it granted to its members for experimentation and demonstration and constant meditation upon its central symbol, 'The Rose'. In its doctrine was the emphasis on the duty of the perfected soul to work for the regeneration of the world. It was quite natural for Yeats, therefore, to make a spirited bid for the regeneration of Ireland by providing her with a new religion, new church and new priesthood, when he took occasion to explain in 'A General Introduction':
"I am convinced that in two or three generations it will become generally known that the mechanical theory has no reality, that the natural and supernatural are knit together; that to escape a dangerous fanaticism we must study a new science; at that moment Europe may find something attractive in a Christ posed against a background not of Judaism but of Druidism, not shut off in dead history, but flowing, concrete and phenomenal.

"I was born into this faith, have lived in it and shall die in it: my Christ, a legitimate deduction from the Creed of St. Patrick, I think, is that 'unity of Being' Dante compared to 'a perfect proportioned human body', Blake's Imagination, what the Upanishads have named 'self'".¹

In the founding of this new national religion, Yeats was powerfully supported by Maud Gonne and his visionary friend, George Russell.

For the detailed consideration of Yeats's 'System' we have to take into account the Indian influence on his poetry. Yeats interest in Indian philosophy synchronized with his active association with Theosophy and The Golden Dawn and it was fostered by three Indian visitors, who came in contact with him - Mohini Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore and Shri Purohit Swamy. Mohini Chatterjee, an

¹ A. Norman Jeffares, Yeats: Selected Criticism (London, 1964) P. 262 - 263.
associate of Madame Blavatsky, visited Dublin in 1886 and lectured to Dublin Society. Yeats was impressed by his character and some of his ideas and many of his early poems - 'Kanva on Himself', 'Quatrains and Aphorisms', 'Anashuya and Vijaya', 'The Indian upon God' and 'The Indian to His Love' were inspired by his contact. Yeats met Tagore in 1912 and was deeply impressed by his personality and his social status. He was a Vedic sage incarnate, belonging to an aristocratic family, with patriotic inclinations. In many ways his position was similar to that of Yeats himself who helped generously in the revision and improvement of the English translation of Tagore's Bengali poems, for which due acknowledgement was made by the latter. But it was the Indian sage, Purohit Swami, with whom Yeats was closely associated for five years, who influenced him most profoundly. Yeats has referred to Indian wisdom and to the concept of self as given in the Upanishads; he has also mentioned the Indian conception of the five elements, the identity of the soul and the super-soul (Brahma) and the final stage of Yoga when the soul is liberated from the bondage of action and becomes aware of its own identity. But his major poems offer no warrant for the belief that Yeats was genuinely and deeply influenced by the Indian Wisdom and philosophy.

(F) YEATS AND THE ROMANTIC TRADITION:

In "Coole Park and Ballylee", Yeats described himself as one of 'the last romantics', to which one may add that he was one who successfully bridged the gulf between the romantic tradition of the
19th century and the modernist literature of the 20's which was produced in direct and deliberate opposition to that tradition. Chronologically speaking, Yeats was connected with the last generation of the romantic poets, the members of the Rhymer's Club and the poets and painters of the pre-Raphaelite school and his early writings are coloured by this association. His youthful imagination was nourished on the poetry of Shelley and in his 'day dreaming' childhood he was apt to pose as Manfred, Prince Athanase and Alastor. Moreover, the first poet whom he studied and edited was Blake, the poet-painter who fabricated a mythology of his own to keep his originality and uniqueness intact and his own early poetry has all the characteristic flavour and limitation of the typical romantic verse - a tendency to escape into the land of romance or peaceful bosom of nature, flirtations with lovely phantoms or figures of folk-lore and superstition and fondness for poetic words, for 'pale' and 'yellow' colour and vague epithets and descriptions as well as wavering rhythm.

But as Yeats advanced in years he became critical of the theory and practice of the romantics of the 90's and while remaining rooted in the romantic tradition, he resolutely and quite effectively sought to broaden and tighten the fabric of romanticism itself.
When we call him a romantic poet we refer more to his temperament than to his style and theme. It will be better if we take up the various traits of a romantic mind and illustrate them from the poetry of Yeats. A romantic temperament has one basic trait which may manifest itself in hundred ways. The essence of romanticism is the consciousness of one's 'self' or individuality or uniqueness which colours the work with a personal point of view. None was more aware of his personal point of view in art than Yeats and for him even the national heritage was dull until it was remoulded by a new personality:

"The poetry of Young Ireland", he wrote, "when it was an attempt to change or strengthen opinion, was rhetoric; but it became poetry when patriotism was transformed into a personal emotion by the events of life ... literature is always personal, always one man’s vision of the world, one man’s experience". (Samhain, P. 121).

The poetic form best suited to a romantic temper is the lyric and when we think of the romantic poetry we are at once reminded of its emphasis on the lyric as the ideal kind of poetry and the lyric itself as a personal utterance, 'an allegory' of the 'poet’s own mind' or the image of his life and experience and in style marked by sincerity, spontaneity and passionate intensity, which necessitate its brevity, for intense passion cannot be prolonged without diluting its fervour.
Yeats was a lyric poet par excellence and he remained a lyric poet all his life and his critical writings are replete with references to the vital connection between the life and the letters of a lyric poet, between his personality and his poems, and the note of sincerity in his verses. The following quotations will serve to substantiate the point:

"It is necessary that the lyric poet's life should be known; that we should understand that his poetry is no rootless flower but the seed of a man".¹

"A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work, out of its tragedy; whatever it be, remorse, lost love, or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria ...; He is part of his own phantasmagoria and we adore him because nature has grown intelligible, and by so doing a part of our creative power, 'When mind is lost in the light of Self', says the Prashna Upanishad, 'It dreams no more; still in body it is lost in happiness', 'A wiseman seeks in self', says the Chandogya Upanishad, 'those that are alive and those that are dead and gets what the world cannot give'. The world knows nothing because it has made nothing, we know everything because we have made everything".²

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¹ Lecture on 'Friends of My Youth' which was delivered by Yeats on March 9, 1910.

Yeats, however, was in favour of the dramatic lyric; where the poet assumes so many 'masks' to express the feelings and emotions or moods and states of mind which are generally personal. The poetry of W.B.Yeats is full of such masks, ranging from Cuchulain to CrazyJane, the Fool and the Madman or the old man with an 'eagle mind', Machel Angelo. Yet the face behind these masks is only one man's and that man is Yeats himself - the Dramatis Personae are simply the mouth-pieces of the poet himself, mere puppets moving and gesticulating to the dictates of the puppet-master. Moreover, in the interweaving of personal life and created literature, Yeats is as daring as Charles Lamb, the personal essayist. The figures which people in his pages are persons who were closely related to him in his real life. His ancestors, his friends and collaborators, the women he loved, criticised and hated, the populace he has to deal with at The Abbey Theatre; the heroes he admired; the politicians he hated and the friends who constituted the glory of his life.

"You that would judge me, do not judge alone
This book or that, came to this hallowed place
Where my friend's portraits. hang and look there on;
Ireland's history in their lineaments trace,
Think where man's glory most begins and ends,
And say my glory was I had such friends".
Similarly, his philosophy of history and of the individual souls, embodied in his 'System', is simply a contrived mirror of the conflicting traits and passions warring in his own heart and it is interesting to remember how many of crucial symbols are based upon his personal properties - the Tower and the Winding Stair, the Sword of Sato, with a sheath, covered with a worn-out court lady's dress, his personal ring with hawk and butterfly, the 'Lapis Lazuli' which he received as a gift, to mention only the major items.

A romantic poet absorbs the whole universe in himself and prizes the reality within him, which, he believes, creates all the realities outside of him. This was one of the strong convictions of Yeats, the poet: Consider the following extract from his The Dramatic Movement:

"We lose our freedom more and more as we get away from ourselves - because we have turned the table of values upside down and believe that the root of reality is not in the centre but somewhere in the whirling circumference .... In the end the creative energy of man depends on their believing that they have, within themselves, something immortal and imperishable, and that all else is but an image in a looking glass. So long as that belief is not a formal thing, a man will create out of a joyful energy, seeing little for any external test of an impulse that may be sacred and looking for no foundation outside life itself". This viewpoint is supported by the following citations from his poems:
I mock Plotinus thought
And cry in Plato's teeth,
Death and life were not
Till man made up the whole,
Made lock, stock and barrel
Out of his bitter soul,
Aye, sun, moon and star, all
Whatever flames upon the night
Man's own resinous hearts had fed.

Yeats's was always anxious to expand his personality, like the
characters of Shakespeare, as he himself confessed, till it became
merged in the larger personality of the common humanity, with the
result that his emotions and experiences assumed the form of those
sentiments which are familiar to the people. He aspired after producing
'the book of the people'. Like a typical romantic poet he started with
personal problems and conflicts and sought to create a general
philosophy of life and history out of it.

Again it was the belief of the romantic poets of Shelleyan brand
that the poet is a singer and from the depth of his heart, under
inspiration, suddenly gushes out the fountain of song, which he pours
out in profuse strains of unpremeditated thought, though listeners be
there or not. This subordination of art to inspiration had lost much
of its force with the 'last romantics' of the 90's who were inspired by Flaubert's martyrdom to style. Yeats was wholeheartedly with them in his passion for order, organization, for moulding the multiplicity into unit or a single image. To this end he was given to correcting and polishing his poems and making several versions of them, so that he reminded his students of the familiar practice of Virgil that he brought forth his verses like the young ones of a she-wolf, misshapen at the time of their birth, but given proper shape by constant licking.

'Cold passion' or 'passionate coldness' was his ideal of artistic highest lyric sentiment, as it was indicative of the successful artistic discipline. To this end he adapted to his special purpose the famous Wordsworthian formula that the language of poetry should be an imitation of the language actually spoken by a man in a state of heightened passion. He adopted what he came to describe as a 'passionate syntax' to create the effect of the natural voice of a speaker behind the written word.

It is generally believed that the lyric poet is an artist of short breath and the essence of this kind of poetry is concentration rather than expansion. Yeats was very well aware of the fact that the modern age is ill-suited for the production of the epic, which was the form developed by Homer, his favourite model, whose tradition he was eager to follow and perpetuate. The device which he finally adopted, under
the stress of peculiar circumstances of his times, can better be

described in the words of a recent student of his poetic arts:

"Yeats quickly recognised that grandeur in art could no longer be
achieved quantitatively, by crowding a work with large cast of
characters, many plots, a multitude of ideas and emotions; allusion and
suggestion, symbol and emblem, therefore, soon became central to his
aesthetic as technique of gaining capaciousness and echo, the
reverberation of vast worlds rather than the vast worlds themselves".¹

His poetic style is a continuation of the romantic style,
modified, stripped base, made more flexible and plain, where every word
is weighed and measured.

The tradition which Yeats inherited and on which his youthful mind
was fed and which his mature mind refined, enriched and rejuvenated was
the English romanticism of which Spenser was the first representative
and Blake, Shelley, William Morris and the Young aesthetes of the
1890's the modern exponents. Yeats was a romantic poet in a sense
slightly different from that implied in his famous verses --

We were the last romantics - chose for theme
Traditional sanctity and loveliness
Whatever's written in what poet's name

¹. Edward Endelberg, The Vast Design, (Toronto, 1965 (Reprinted)),
P.6.
The book of the people, whatever most can bless,
The mind of man and elevate a rhyme!
But all is changed, that high horse rider-less,
Though mounted in that saddle Hemer rode.


In his youth Yeats happened to inform his father that he was going to express his feelings in his own natural language and the reply he received from his mentor was a sharp rebuff - 'personal utterance is egoism'. John Butler Yeats was all for drama and for the expression of feeling through the mouths of Dramatis Personae, his son stuck to the lyric, but impregnated it with dramatic element. At an early stage of his poetic career he realized:

"If a man is to write lyric poetry he must be shaped by nature and art to someone out of a half-dozen traditional poses, and be lover or saint, sage or sensualist, or mere mocker on all life; and none but that stroke of luckless luck can open before him the accumulated expression of the world". (Reveries, P. 53).

This realization led to the development of his elaborate theory of the Mask, which must be considered at some length because it became an essential part of his philosophy. 'Out of the conflict with ourselves we make poetry' and in Yeats his personal conflict showed itself very
early, as he was a shy, solitary and timid dreamer by nature, but
desired to be a man of action to fulfil his nationalistic ambition and
to prove himself worthy of his lady-love, Maud Gonne. Browning speaks
of the two aspects of a lover's soul, with one he faces the world and
with the other he enters into the world of his beloved. Yeats was
obliged to assume the mask of heroism even before his beloved. This
idea which arose out of a personal necessity became eventually a
fundamental tenet of his psychology. He wrote in 1909,

"I think that all happiness depends on the energy to assume the
mask of some other self; that all joyous or creative life is a rebirth
as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created
in a moment and perpetually renewed; in playing game like of a child
where one loses the infinite pain of self-realisation ... If we cannot
imagine ourselves as different from what we are and try to assume that
second self we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves though we may
accept one from others. Active virtue, as distinguished from the
passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously
dramatic, the wearing of a mask".¹

The theory of mask, in its later development, assumed the form
of the antithesis between the 'self' and 'anti-self', 'man' and his

P. 173.
'daimon'. "Reality for Yeats is neither to be found in that buried self which directs and orders a man's life or in its Mask, the anti-self, but in the product born of their struggle. Extroverts, Yeats felt, must flee their Masks. Introverts, writers, musicians, all creative men must recognise their own proper masks, ideal opposites, and in trying to become those nearly impossible otherselves create the dramatic tension from which art arises.¹ Richard Ellman has attempted a very perceptive analysis of this aspect, part of which is pertinent to recall here:

"His inclination, which had begun much earlier, to pose before the world as something different from what he was, to hide this secret self, had come to the point where he saw himself as divided into two parts. This sense of a bifurcated self, was not, as he thought it, unique. Many of his more sensitive contemporaries had shared it".²

The last decade of the 19th century was dominated by the idea that a man is really two men - Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde - that character is distinct from personality, that the writer is at once a natural man as he appears in real life and an artist who purifies his personality of all accidents to preside over 'the world of art and imagination'. The earlier stories of Yeats are coloured by this sense of polarity, which appears in the shape of contrasted characters -

Sherman and Howard and, more complex, Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne, representing the two halves of his own self, what he actually was and what he wished to be, and his whole life was really a search for the way of balancing and reconciling the several halves of his self-hood. In 1910, some time before he began to write A Vision, he declared that all things have conflicting central form:

"I think that all noble things are the result of warfare, great nations and classes, of warfare in the visible world, great poetry and philosophy, of invisible warfare, the division of the mind within itself, a victory, the sacrifice of a man to himself." This idea became the basis of Yeats's complex system.

(YEATS'S POETICAL PROGRESS:

Yeats's period of active literary production is rather long: it spans over fifty years. During such a long period Yeats's genius grew in various directions - these may be called the various phases of his poetry. In fact, as a poet, Yeats always went on growing and developing. His later poetry is a growth from and an evolution of the earlier creations and it represents 'the consummation of a long and fruitful career'. It is also a reminder how a poet can and should develop. The various phases of Yeats's poetry can be termed as follows:

Some critics have called the earliest period of Yeats's poetry the Celtic Twilight Period. This period covers the following poetic works:

1. The Juvenilia (1885)
2. The Crossways (1889)
3. The Rose (1893) and
4. The Wind Among the Reeds (1899)

THE JUVENILIA:

The Juvenilia is Yeats's earliest work. It consists of a number of poems mostly dramatic in form, inspired by Arcadian and Indian themes, where the dominant influences are Spenser and Shelley. The style is a hybrid of ill-digested elements and scenery is romantic, even exotic. The dramatic form was chosen probably in response to the views of his father who was opposed to the egoism of a lyric poet. It
not only contains poems in the imitation of Shelley and Spenser but also poems on Indian themes such as "Anashuya and Vijaya", "The Indian Upon God", "The Indian to His Love". The Indian pieces were inspired by the poet's exhilarating encounter with the Brahmin Mohini Chatterjee in 1886. The first poem "Anashuya and Vijaya" clearly reminiscent of Kalidasa's lovely play Abhigyan Shakuntala, is an idyll of youthful love in the cloistral seclusion of a hermitage. In the solemn sonorous lines 'Swear by the parents of the gods/ Dread oath, who dwell on Sacred Himalay/ On the far Golden Peak', the informed ear of an Indian student will certainly catch the echo of the sublime description of the great hermitage of the parents of men and Gods in Kalidas's famous play, which was available in English translation at the time this poem was written. "The Indian upon God" points out the omnipresence of God in the universe and His creature's futile but persistent effort to image 'the dark, limitless ocean' of the Supreme reality as a concrete living being. Every anthropomorphic attempt results in the conception of God as the glorified image of the contemplator himself. The creature fashions the creator in its own image. This is another aspect of personal truth, of man's tendency to make the mystery tangible to him. "The Indian to His Love" is another beautiful love lyric. The style and imagery are reminiscent of the shorter love-lyrics of Shelley and present the pair of human lovers in the bosom of a tranquil natural scenery--
While our love grows on Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the tide that gleams, the wings
That gleam and dart.

The lover is hopeful that this ardent love will survive the death of their bodies.

Poems of this period are poems of moods, they are renderings of an atmosphere or a situation which is at once individual and typical. The beauty lies in the pen-pictures of ideal places or conditions of life. The poet would prefer defeatist mood and like aesthetes live in emotions and sensations; he would prefer to run away to a world of fancy than face the crude realities. But he is really not clear as to where to go. The poetry of this period is a poetry of escape into the land of heart's desire, with a hunting incantatory rhythm and decorative drapery of strange symbolism, calculated to produce a hypnotic effect.

The Crossways is a collection of poems which are, on the whole, concerned primarily with "longing and complaint". The opening piece, "The Song of the Happy Shepherd", centres round the conflict between the sovereignty of the poetic imagination and the foolish passion for 'dusty deeds'; between the grey truth discovered by science and the
personal truth felt by the heart and tested on the pulses - 'there is no truth saving in thine own heart'. So the happy Shepherd exhorts us:

Go gather in the humming sea
Some twisted echo-harbouring shell
And to its lips thy story tell,
And they thy comforters will be,
Rewarding in melodious guile
They fretful words a little while,
Till they shall singing fade in ruth
And die a pearly brotherhood;
For words alone are certain good.

Though earth dreams no more, the necessity of dreaming still persists:

For fair are poppies on the brow:
Dream, dream, for this is also sooth.

The next poem, "The Sad Shepherd", is an exact counterpart of the first, with which it is thematically linked, though its argument is antithetical to the convictions of the happy shepherd. The sad shepherd is wandering about in a hostile world seeking to share his sorrow with some other creature or object of nature, but has found no comforter. Then he picks up a sea-shell to breathe the sadness of his heart through 'a hollow, pearly heart' in order to get rid of his
'ancient burden'. But he hears the echo of his own misery:

   But the sad dweller by the sea-ways lone
   Changed all he say to inarticulate moan
   Among her wildering whirls; forgetting him.

The poem "Down by the Salley Gardens" tells of a love which has been spoilt by the lover's failure to take love and life easy. The lover's attitude destroys the girl's love for him and the lover, older and wiser, is left to regret his folly. Yeats's use of ballad form in this volume is noteworthy. The volume ends with three ballads which are concerned with regret and loss. "The Ballad of Moll Magee", for instance, is about a woman who, after accidentally smothering her baby to death, becomes an outcast. The woman is jeered at by children and she feels tortured by her memories of the baby. The woman's emotions are traced with a subtlety and intensity which reminds us of some of Wordsworth's lyrical ballads.

The collection of poems in the volume The Rose was marked by a serious note which arose out of certain personal experiences of lasting importance. In 1891 he encountered the celebrated Irish Beauty, Maud Gonne, who gave him the first taste of real love, which startled, waylaid and overwhelmed the dreamer of the Celtic Twilight and dragged him into national politics. He was also deep in his studies of Shelley and William Blake, simultaneously with his initiation into the
mysteries of Theosophy and the Order of The Golden Dawn. The result was the composition of a number of lyrics linked together by the complex symbol of Rose with its multiple meanings. Yeats himself has explained some of the associations of the Rose in poetry, religion and the occult sciences. The rose was the flower sacred to Mary and emblematic of the Heaven in Dante. It was the flower that transformed the 'golden ass' of Apuleins and admitted him into the fellowship of Isis. The Irish poets had adopted it as the symbol of Ireland, while in English poetry its association had been long and complex, since the days of the Romance of the Rose and it was adopted as a symbol of the lady-love and of both the aspects, physical and spiritual, of the sentiment of love itself. The Rose invoked in the solemn verses which open the section can easily be identified with Shelley's Intellectual Beauty, from which it is, however, distinguished by Yeats himself:

"The quality symbolised as The Rose differs from the Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and Spenser in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar". But the Rose also has a very close association with the doctrine and ritual of the Golden Dawn of which Yeats has had a personal first-hand knowledge. The volume "The Rose" includes the exquisite lyric, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree". This beautiful lyric became popular with its first readers and has retained its popularity till this day. Yeats himself described it as:
"my first lyric with anything in its rhythm of my own music, I had begun to loosen rhythm as an escape from rhetoric and from the emotion of the crowd that rhetoric brings, but I only understood vaguely and occasionally that I must for my special purpose use nothing but the common syntax". (The Autobiographies, P.153).

The poem is remarkable for the studied simplicity of style and surface refinement. Its rhythmical felicity is equally noteworthy. The poem offers food for all the senses and is a nice blend of realism and romantic escapism.

The Rose is the central symbol in these poems - "Red Rose, Proud Rose, Sad Rose of all my days" as Yeats names it. In this volume, Yeats began to use material from the Gaelic legends, the Cuchulain saga and the tales of the Fianna. The principal themes are Irish, love and sorrow, especially the poet's love for Maud Gonne; and the occult such as the Tree of Life and The Tree of Knowledge in the secret cult of the Golden Dawn. The Irish themes are represented by King Fergus's abdication of royalty in exchange for a life of dreams and Cuchulain's fight with the sea. The tragic story of Cuchulain, the murder of his son by the ignorant hero and his fight with sea-waves under enchantment is told here with remarkable simplicity, terseness and force which proclaims the emergence of a greater maturity of style and a closer involvement in the fate of a national hero who was to become a symbol of tragic gaiety for Yeats.
The Rose is a collection of poems whose general theme is the symbolization of Platonic ideas by means of figures from Irish mythology and early Irish history. The relation of the Rose to the Irish figures is indicated in the opening poem, "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time", in which mention is made to Cuchulain and Fergus and old Eire. In other words, Ireland, especially the Ireland of heroic legend, is welcomed by him as his new subject. The use of classical and Irish names as illustration and as a climax to the Neo-platonic theme, the handling of the line-lengths, the skilful placing of the emphatic words and the simple yet effective tripartite structure of the complete poem show that this synthesis of Yeats's ideas helped him to mature as a poet. In The Rose, Yeats's craftsmanship is "more confident and more co-ordinated than in his early writing".

In The Wind Among the Reeds, which was hailed by Symons as a collection, which came closest to the manners of the French symbolist poets, Mallarme, Verlaine and Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Yeats had mostly drawn upon Irish mythology, and folklore, where the characters stand for the various elements and for human desires, which they, in turn, symbolise. Poetry in this volume is more refined and complex. In this volume the influence of the French symbolists like Mallarme, Villiers de L'Isle Adam and Maeterlinck is most clearly seen than anywhere else in Yeats's work, but the Irish figures and Irish themes still supply the bulk of Yeats's symbols. The poetry of The Wind Among the Reeds

then is a very remarkable achievement, it is, though a poetry of withdrawal, both more subtle and more vital than any product of Victorian romanticism.

By the time this work appeared, Yeats had already had a foretaste of magic, astrology, occultism, theosophy, crystalgazing etc. and the volume shows the impact of his new interests. "There is little of ease and systematic simplicity in it. There is a prophet like tone; and it is less an unpremeditated thing than an artifact: it is thought of as a talisman or 'yantra' made by some medieval magician; it was to be meditated upon for hours rather than read in a hurry; and then, a bit of divine reality will be seen in it. The poet is a seer, who has pensively worked himself into a receptive mood; to him has come a revelation; he has netted it, as if it were, in words; and patient contemplation of it will make the truth over to the reader".

The poetry of The Wind Among the Reeds contains some of the most effective of the tenuous symbolic poetry that Yeats wrote. We find in the poems of this volume the same deep sense of contrast which is apparent in Yeats's earlier poetry.

The opening poem, "The Hosting of the Sidhe" describes the gathering of the fairy folk with a tremendous sense of their difference

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from humanity and a careful exploitation of proper names. "The Everlasting Voices" contains the contrast between life in time and life outside time. A similar contrast between the fairy and the human is the basis of "The Unappeasable Host". "Into the Twilight" has as its theme the contrast between the world of human morality and the changeless values of "the mystical brotherhood / Of sun and moon and hollow and wood". Yeats continually used his symbols to express a sense of difference, not of identity. But the folk strain was still running through Yeats's poetry, curbing his esoteric impulses and producing every now and again a simple, realistic poem, which foreshadows what has been called his realistic period. "The song of the Old Mother", for example, is a short, simple, realistic poem describing the hard domestic life of an Irish peasant woman. Theories of symbolism seem to have been forgotten and all Yeats is doing here is etching a picture he remembers having seen.

The poems in The Wind Among the Reeds are concerned with love, with longing and regret. The wind is the central symbol of vague desires and aspirations. But with the marriage of Maud Gonne in 1903, the romantic dreams were shattered and his heart was filled with bitterness, which the poet articulated in the lyrics of the next collection where the style naturally becomes more pointed, realistic
and astringement, announcing the advent of the second phase of his poetic development, which was really a process of modification rather than a clean break with the past.

THE SECOND PHASE (1903-1914):

The second phase in the poetic career of Yeats may be described as a transitional period, during which the poet was moving towards a more realistic, condensed, flexible and 'brutal' style, characteristic of the modern poetry. Various factors combined to draw Yeats out of his ivory tower. His frustration in love - Maud Gonne married Major Mac Bride in 1903 - fundamentally reshaped his attitude towards poetry. So bitterness of frustrated love, his dis-satisfaction with the Irish people who had hissed Synge's The Playboy of the Western World, the disillusionment caused by the pettiness and meanness of real life which he experienced during his involvement in public controversies like The Lane Controversy, his connection with the Abbey Theatre, the selfishness and hypocrisy of Irish politicians, his contact with Synge who advised him, "before verse can be human again, it must learn to be brutal", study of Blake and contact with Arthur Symons and Ezra Pound, his entanglement with Theosophy, all helped to bring Yeats down to earth.

Hence, the poetry of this period shows a keen sense of life and reality and it is again full of disillusionment, impatience and
indignation. Yeats had come to the conclusion that poetry should not escape from the real life, there should not be a rejection of real life, but an acceptance of it. So his themes became realistic. He also made his style more definite and precise. The tone of Yeats's poetry of this period is that of bitterness and frustration which is caused by failure and frustration in love and his criticism as a poet and a participant in Irish National Movement. The love-poetry of this time is imbued in the every sentiment of bitterness and disillusionment. The tone is more realistic and mood more complex and the poet comes out of his isolated retreat in the world of concrete reality and adorns his verse with events and facts of the day-to-day life. The poet begins to learn a new vocabulary and new technique. Instead of florid and musical words, now he uses prosaic words of everyday speech and concentrates on the gross essence of thought. His diction assumes a colloquial, harsh, rugged and prosaic character. There is therefore, an austerity, an absence of ornament. The imagery is precise. Directness, economy and precision are the key notes of Yeats's style at this period. The poet's rhythms are no longer incantatory, but come closer to the rhythms of normal everyday speech. Besides the stylistic changes, the period is also remarkable for the mythopoetic gifts and metaphysical technique.
The major works of this transitional period are the following:-

1. In the Seven Woods (1904)
2. The Green Helmet and Other Poems (1910) and
3. Responsibilities (1914)

The title of the volume *In the Seven Woods* refers to the seven Woods of Coole Park and this in itself shows how decisive Lady Gregory’s influence must have been in the writing of the poems of this volume. It is a crucial point in the poetic career of Yeats for here he finally speaks with his own voice, expressing considerable bitterness and disillusionment.

The most remarkable poem in this volume is "Adam's Curse" written in a colloquial style, a conversation between Yeats and Sister of Maud Gonne, Mrs. Kathleen Pitcher, sitting beside the great lady herself. The subject is Adam's Curse, that is labour, necessary for producing things beautiful and noble. The poet must work harder than a road-mender to produce lines which appear to be effortless and spontaneous ... 'a moment's thought'. Thereupon Mrs. Kathleen Pitcher replies that the same labour is also needed to preserve the female beauty. Then the conversation passes on to love, where some people (like Yeats himself) rely on courtesy and refined manners, described in the books on chivalry, but now, with the poet's frustration in his noble love for Maud Gonne, 'it seems an idle trade enough'. Then comes
the image of the moon in the sky, worn like a washed shell, which is taken as the fittest symbol of their high romantic love, empty of substance.

In the poem "The Folly of Being Comforted", the suggestion that the growing age of his beloved will allay the fever of his blood generated by her youthful beauty is rejected with contempt because age has made her body more transparent of her real fire and nobility.

Because of that nobleness of hers
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs
Burns but more closely. O she had not these ways
when all the wild summer was in her gaze.

"Red Hanrahan's song about Ireland" is a patriotic poem dealing with the perpetual and life giving inspiration flowing from the heroic sacrifices of the old patriot, Cathleen, the daughter of Hulihan (Ireland) whose readiness to sell away her soul to the Devil had already been celebrated by Yeats in his first great play - Countess Cathleen. When the storm breaks out and the courage of Irish fighters for freedom begins to fail, they are inspired by the noble image of that lady - purer than a tall candle before the Holy Rood (Cross, the symbol of suffering, love and sacrifice).
"The Players Ask for a Blessing" centres round a favourite thought of poets and artists, that the singer may be mortal, but the song produced by him is immortal:

.... bless the hands that play.
The notes they awaken shall live on
When all this heavy history's done.

In the poems of this volume, although Yeats describes an intangible world, all is now seen in the daylight of clear thought without veiling twilight.

The Green Helmet and Other Poems came in 1910 when Yeats had become a recognised poet, but his old dreams about happy love, national theatre, the Irish populace and patriotic endeavours were shattered. The poems in this framework are marked by a tone of regret and bitterness, a sober determination to question and dissect the ideals and aspirations which had inspired him in his early youth.

In the seven poems concerned with Maud Gonne the poet attempts a more realistic portrait of her, who is, however, becoming equated with the destructive Greek beauty, Helen, sung by Homer and indirectly therefore, Yeats is aligning himself with the father of the Greek epic, who sang of the heroic age for the benefit of the world of his times and presented the wisdom of the sages in "the dialect of the tribe". "Out of our quarrel with ourselves we create poetry", Yeats had
remarked, and these poems are the examples of self-dramatization and attempt to present in poetic terms his reactions to the persons and events connected with his personal life. Maud Gonne is introduced in 'A Woman Homer Sung' in the following lines:

"For she had fiery blood / When I was young,

And trod so sweetly proud / As it were, upon a cloud,

A Woman Homer sung / that life and letters seem

But an heroic dream".

This leads to the most powerful lyric of the group, "No Second Troy", in which the poet attempts an appraisal of her conduct as the woman who betrayed him and wasted her own life and energy in arousing the ignorant populace to patriotic frenzy and partisan fanaticism. In the poem Maud Gonne has been represented as 'cruel' like Helen of Troy. She is seen in terms of destruction. But she must not be blamed because, being what she is, she cannot help herself. Yeats has given many portraits of Maud Gonne in his poetry and prose.

There are occasions when the poet shows a poignant yearning for close and inseparable union:

But, dear, cling close to me; since you were gone,

My barren thoughts have chilled me to the bone.

And I that have not your faith, how shall I know
That in the binding light beyond the grave
We'll find so good a thing as that we have lost?
The hourly kindness, the day's common speech,
The habitual content of each with each.
When neither soul nor body has been crossed.

Then we pass on to the poems inspired by Lady Gregory, his personal friend and comfort and a living symbol of the old aristocracy, patron of art and letters, who was sick and worried about the future of her family in the face of the growing threat to her estate at the hands of the democratic agitators for agrarian reform, out to level down the noble landed families. The poem that expresses it best is "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation". It is a noble poem with a grave rhythm and subdued intensity appropriate to the serious reflective mood which runs through it. The poet argues that the ruin of such an aristocratic house, Lady Gregory's Coole Park, symbol of noble passion, of rectitude and correctitude, breeder of minds with eagle like gaze and piercing percipience, does not appear to be beneficial to the world. Its disintegration, arising from the reduction of land rates, may add something to the economic stature of the ordinary families, but they will, nevertheless, lack that leisure, wealth and long cultural tradition of the nobility which were productive of high-soaring thoughts, freedom and laughter, linking as they did, the present with the past in an inspiring bond of solidarity. No upstart family can
produce, as these families did, men gifted with power to govern the nation and create high literature. There are numerous references in Yeats’s mature poetry to the qualities of the aristocrats and the close connection between aristocracy and art.

He refers to the exhaustion caused by the Theatre business in "The Fascination of What's Difficult":

The fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins ....
My curse on plays
They have to be set up in fifty ways,
On the day's war with every knave and dolf
Theatre business, management of men.
The same note vibrates through "All Things Can Tempt Me":
All things can tempt me from this craft of verse
One time it was a woman's face or worse
The seeming needs of my foot-driven land.

"The Coming of Wisdom with Time" is a fine Imagist poem. The technique of presenting an emotion through a brief and vivid image is used here to convey the acute and sharp self-criticism which constantly pushed Yeats towards re-examination of himself and his art.
In the poems of the volume The Green Helmet and Other Poems there is a note compounded of querulousness, irony, mockery and contempt and barbed with the metaphor and imagery of the gutters, quite appropriate to the mood.

Responsibilities, the collection of Yeats's poems published in the year 1914, is another turning point in Yeats's development as a poet. In these poems he widens the scope of his subject matter to include ironic commentary on contemporary affairs. The splendid elegy on John O'Leary is poetry made out of the stuff of contemporary life and of the poet's contempt for its sordid spirit of money-grubbing:

"What need you, being come to sense,
But stumble in a greasy still
And add the half pence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the bone;
For men were born to pray and save;
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It is with O'Leary in the grave"

Now instead of the remote mythology of Gaelic legend he creates a new mythology out of the memory of the patriots of 18th century Ireland who
still lived in the popular imagination:

"Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed.
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave?"

Here the language is that of common speech but, as in Synge's poems, it is ennobled by sheer intensity of passion. Yeats has come out of the ivory tower of symbolism, but he has brought with him a power capable of transforming contemporary actualities into the material of high poetry.

"To a friend" is addressed to Lady Gregory, defeated in her noble endeavour by 'the brazen throat' of shameless philistines. His advice under the circumstances is "Be secret and exult, amid a place of stone'. The poem is a masterpiece of simple, epigrammatic force. "To a shade" is addressed to the ghost of Parnell, a great patriot and victim of a foul tongue, whose monument was lately constructed. The poet reminds him that the philistines are still at their old game and 'The old foul mouth' (Murphy) who had cast aspersion on his character, had disgraced another noble soul, Hugh Lane, who was offering the people a noble treasure of art (his collection of choice paintings), which would
have given to their children 'loftier thought, sweet emotion, working in their veins like gentle blood'. So the shade must go back to its forgetful grave at Glasnevin.

The volume *Responsibilities* contains a group of fable poems. The fable poems are "The Grey Rock", "The Three Beggars" and "The Hour Before Dawn". These are dry, unromantic pieces. In them, everyday, sometimes colloquial, diction is blended with terms of speech which comes out of the poetic tradition. "The Grey Rock" presents a supernatural being in love with a man and in this case embittered by the man's treachery (a treachery which from another angle is the man's loyalty to his own world). But the poem is less interesting for its story than for its moral which is that a man must keep faith with the eternal powers (the archetypes of art) rather than with any political forces of here and now. "The Three Beggars" is a satirical comment upon everyday avarice. The hero here is a crane who, like the fool or the saint elsewhere in Yeats's poetry, shows no competitive spirit. The moral seems to be that quiescence pays in the end. "The Hour Before Dawn" is a defence of the waking life against the man who intends to sleep till the Day of Judgement: "For all life longs for the Last Day". Yeats had in his time expressed this longing himself and was to continue to express it on occasions. Now, however, he is on the whole an accepter of life instead of a rejecter of it.
Responsibilities also contain the poem called 'A Coat'. In this poem, Yeats decides to discard his romantic material; in other words, he abdicates the throne of the 'twilight'. Rejecting the coat "covered with embroideries out of old mythologies", Yeats decides to write poetry without undue embroidery or ornamentation and decorativeness.

In Responsibilities there is a group of love-poems of which "Friends" and "The Cold Heaven" show a deepening of experience and mastery of line and organization which make them Yeats's greatest achievements in this kind. The poem "Friends" is autobiographical. It expresses the poet's praise and gratitude for three women who came into his life and who served him and helped him, each one in her own unique way. The first woman is Mrs. Olivia Shakespeare, who loved the poet and in whose company the poet found rest, peace and contentment after he was rejected by Maud Gonne. The other woman was Lady Augusta Gregory, the friend and patroness of the poet. She gave him hope and strength. She changed the poet, inspired him to work with courage, so that the poet could live, "labouring in ecstasy". The third woman is Maud Gonne. The poet devoted all his youth to her, but she did not give even "a pitying look on him". She was cruel and proud and love of her ruined his life. Still the poet cannot help praising her. The poet cannot help loving her, despite all her arrogance, pride and cruelty. Maud Gonne is everywhere in Yeats's poetry. Like Dante and Petrarch, Yeats, too, has immortalised his beloved through his poetry.
None of the love poems of Yeats can match the widely passionate outcry of "The Cold Heaven", which is metaphysical in its mixture of blood and spirit, its tense questioning, its mood evocating. Yeats describes Maud Gonne as a 'burning cloud' and as a source of sweetness which sets the lover a-shaking from head to foot. Suddenly he looks up and sees the sky as a sheet of burning ice. This kindles his imagination which awakens the memory of crossed love and his old (cold) heart is heated with a sense of regret in which he takes the whole blame upon himself, trembles and rocks to and fro as his heart is riddled (with a play on the double meaning) with the light issuing from the past memory. His tortured soul becomes the image of a soul released from the body and passing naked through the purgatory of the burning ice which covers the 'rook-delighting sky'. "The Cold Heaven" is generally regarded as the finest lyric in "Responsibilities".

Lastly, there are the two poems "The Magi" and "The Dolls". They are philosophical poems, contrasting fixity with the flux of life. The Magi of Biblical frame are represented as the stiff painted figures. They came to witness the birth of the Saviour, Christ, which caused a commotion in the world of "Doric discipline" (classical civilization). But the saviour was a mortal and his spell did not last long. So they are watching for another revelation or epiphany which will arise from the union of a beast and a mortal. The poem is connected with "Leda and the Swan" and "The
Second Coming. Christian revelation was not final; it must usher into being another phase which will be antithetical to it. The Dolls are the symbols of the artistic permanence above the flux and blood and mire of common life. Their opposition to the cries of the new born babe is a faint replica of the Magi's dissatisfaction with the 'Turbulence of Cavalry'. The poem has strong touches of humour which culminates in the closing lines:

My dear, my dear, O dear,
It was an accident.

Responsibilities is full of novelties. It is a versatile collection. There are in it a number of direct personal or occasional poems and some satirical ones. There are examples of a new kind of fable poetry which avoids becoming allegory. There are a few love poems. Lastly, there are the two poems, "The Magi" and "The Dolls", forerunners of his later philosophical poetry.

THE THIRD PHASE 1915-1928:--

The third phase is not clearly marked off from the second one and appears to be a continuation of it. But certain crucial events had taken place, affecting the poet's personal life and the life of the nation. In 1916 came the Easter rising which brought martyrdom to a number of Irish patriots. The event shook the poet to the very depth of his heart and
compelled him to revise his previous attitude towards the national struggle. In 1917 he married Georgie Hyde Lees and shortly after came the automatic writing of his wife which eventually led to the formation of his 'system', subsequently embodied in 'A Vision'. Many poems of third period reflect these new developments which paved the way for the mature phase of his poetry which emerged with the publication of the poems in The Tower (1928). Under this period fall the following works:

1. The Wild Swans at Coole (1919)
2. Michael Robartes and The Dancer (1921)

The Wild Swans at Coole came out in 1919 and the poems in this collection were inspired by such events as the death of Hugh Lane, followed by the death of Major Robert Gregory, the son of Lady Gregory; the death of Maud Gonne's husband in Easter 1916 and his final rejection by that lady, which was followed by the proposal of marriage to Iseult Gonne, with the same result. The upshot of this double rejection was his hasty marriage in 1917. In the title poem 'The Wild Swans at Coole', Yeats considers the problem of the exhaustion of his imaginative power with the coming of old age. He sees old age as an almost physical assault upon his youthful imaginative energy. He finds acutely and painfully that a gap is opening up between himself and timeless nature. Referring to the Swans he says: "Their hearts have not grown old". The poem ends with the fear that one day, the swans, symbolising his creative relationship with Nature, will have gone, leaving his desolate.
"In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" is an elegy in memory of the young son of Lady Gregory, a personal friend of the poet and symbol of the old world Chivalry, who was killed in action on January 23, 1918 only three months after their marriage and in the closing phase of the First World War. This elegy conveys the idea that life is a short, intense flare. The elegy also mentions three completely different types of men, Lionel Johnson, John Synge and his uncle George Pollenjex, the thought about whose deaths leads the poet to a sense of deprivation and solitude for they were 'a portion of my mind and heart'.

"Men Improve with the Years" concerns Yeats's attitude to Iseult Gonne. Yeats, like other youthful romantic poets, looked upon old age as a curse rather than a blessing, as it brings about not only the decay of the body, but also of his heart, which it petrifies into a marble figure-head, Yeats prayed to be a passionate old man. In youth he ardently loved Maud Gonne and as he declined into the vale of years he was taken with the youthful charms of her daughter Iseult Gonne. But to the great anguish of his heart he realized that while age has enriched his mind with wisdom, it has left his heart inert and passionless, so that he may gaze on the charming face of the young girl and listen to the music of her tongue for a whole day without feeling any sign of life and warmth in his cold heart. How happy he would have been if chance had brought him face to face with the young charmer in his youth when the blood was warm and the heart burning with passion for youth and beauty. The idea appears in many of his lyrics.
Marriage brought in Yeats a new kind of intensity which arises from that intimacy of love between man and woman whose desire is fulfilled and peace attained, at least for a brief while. This new kind of love is manifest in the lyrics about Solomon and Sheba, whose wise souls discover the superior wisdom of the bodies as they become one on the bridal bed. 'Solomon to Sheba' (1918) is a dialogue on this wisdom of love. Solomon broaches the subject:

"We have gone round and round
In the narrow theme of love
Like an old horse in a pound".

In the conclusion this homely image is transfigured:

And all day long we have found
There's not a thing but love can make
The world a narrow pound.

The poem celebrates the triumph of love when two hearts have become one flame in a perfect union of bodies and souls. The sentiment expressed here is in the best tradition of love-poetry, represented by Shakespeare, Donne, Browning and Shelley.

The poem called "The Living Beauty" emphasises the view that the heart is the ultimate value, satisfied with nothing but a living beauty. This poem resumes the theme of the old poet confronted with a young beauty.
"To a Young Girl" is a tribute to the passionate heart natural to youth, which marked even the apparently cold Maud Gonne in the days of her youthful glory:

When the wild thought / That she denies
And has forgot / Set all her blood astir
And glittering in her eyes.

In "The Fisherman", Yeats presents the kind of man who, he thinks, would appreciate the intense unadorned poetry he is trying to write. What the imaginary fisherman in the poem symbolises is an apparently detached intensity: fishing is an activity of quiet concentration.

We may now pass on to the group of poems devoted to Maud Gonne. "Her praise" underlines the gratitude which Maud was able to win from the poor, both old and young, while "The People" contrasts the poet's contempt for the thankless people with Maud's love for them. "His Phoenix" [Jan. 1915] explains the implication of the new image 'phoenix' which Yeats now uses for 'that most lonely thing', 'the fallen Majesty'. No beauty boasted of by the past history and romance could match her and no beauty of the future can be her exact copy. Maud Gonne in her loneliness aroused Yeats's paternal solicitude and he wrote in his diary:

"She is my innocence and I her wisdom. Of old she was a phoenix and I feared her, but now she is my child more than my sweetheart".
In the poem that follows "A Thought from Propertius" the centre is the shapely body of Maud Gonne. The "Broken Dreams" are vague memories of ageing Maud Gonne's youthful beauty, which she will regain after death:

In that mysterious, always brimming lake
Where those that have obeyed the holy law
Paddle and are perfect

"A Deep-Sworn Vow" reiterates the poet's constant preoccupation with her face, while "Presences" gives us the poet's dream of three women - one a harlot (the woman who pretended to be pregnant in order to entrap the poet into matrimony); one a child, innocent of man (Iseult Gonne) and 'one, it may be a queen' (Maud herself).

"Upon a Dying Lady" was written about Mabel Beardsley, who was dying of cancer. The poet says that Mabel Beardsley is able to face the reality of death mainly through art, not conventional religion. Having lived in joy, she will be able to laugh in the face of death.

This volume contains three philosophical poems. The first of these is "Ego Dominus Tuus". It is a dialogue poem in which Hick, the dependant of the subjectivity of art, is opposed by Ille, who declares that literature should be independent of the artist's personal life, indeed, the antithesis of it. In great poetry, says Ille, the poet expresses his anti-self, as Dante and Keats did. In this poem Yeats is working his way towards his theory of the poetic mask.
The second philosophical poem is "The Phases of the Moon". Yeats here imagines a quarrel between himself and his creations, Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne. Read in conjunction with "Ego Dominus Tuus", this poem is an assertion that through a poetic image of anti-self the poet can achieve a victory over the apparently meaningless cycles of life.

The third philosophical poem is "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes". This poem celebrates the poet's resolution, through the poetic image of the dancer, of the conflict between intellect, as represented by the sphinx, and heart, as represented by the Buddha. At the start of the poem, Robartes is torn by these conflicting forces but the dancer, symbolising a fusion of intellect and heart, spirit and body, gives a glimpse of the 'unity of being' of the fifteenth phase of the moon and this mitigates his agony. The opposites are resolved into a unified activity, where each receives its due, without being allowed to predominate over the other.

Michael Robartes and the Dancer is a short collection which contains three very remarkable and memorable poems of Yeats: "Easter, 1916", "The Second Coming" and "A Prayer for My Daughter". In this collection, the poet can be seen in a newer light. The events of the war years in Ireland dominate it. The heroes of the Easter Rebellion (1916), in themselves ordinary and one of them 'a lout', had suddenly by one consecrated act, became transformed. Yeats praised them in his poem "Easter 1916". The
change in his attitude can well be guessed from the following lines:

"Here anarchy is loosed upon the world.
The blood dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned".

-- The Second Coming.

The poem also illustrates the myth-making habit of the poet. His mythopoetic imagination transforms and modifies old myths to suit his purpose as well as makes new myths. He writes in the opening lines of the poem:

"I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth century houses".

The impression created is that of some legendary or mythological figures coming out of the dead past and taking part in the activity of the present.

"The Second Coming" expresses Yeats's suspicion of political fanaticism: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity". In this poem Yeats speaks of the rise and fall of civilization, a theory which he later elaborated in A Vision. Surveying the contemporary anarchy in Ireland and indeed throughout Europe, Yeats feels that the forces of Christian faith are almost spent and that a new,
more brutal, force is about to take over. Christianity is like a falcon that has lost touch with the falconer and is thus lost and directionless. "The ceremony of innocence" has been drowned by "the blood-dimmed tide".

"A Prayer For My Daughter" expresses Yeats's anxiety about his first child, Anne, who was born in February 1919. This poem was written when the Black and Tans were beginning to make their presence felt in Ireland. In this poem, Yeats considers what the future might hold for his baby-daughter. Though worried, he is not without hope for the future. He expresses his hope on the values symbolised by Coole Park and Ireland's aristocratic traditions: "And may her bridegroom bring her to a house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious". In such a place his daughter can align herself with life giving forces, making herself independent of sterile political debate. Behind this prayer for his daughter are his memories of Maud Gonne who comes to symbolise the tragedy of beauty and grace distorted by politics, arrogance and intellectual hatred.

Of all types of hate, intellectual hatred is most pernicious. He has known a woman (Maud Gonne) endowed with beauty and rich in courtesy who has, however, converted herself into a hot fury of noisy arguments and rhetoric because of her political dogmatism and angry disputations. This exchange of courtesy and goodness of heart for withering political hatred is indeed a sordid bargain.
Yeats wrote in his Diary in 1910:

Women, because the main event of their lives has been a giving of themselves, give themselves to an opinion as if it were a stone doll... Women should have their play with dolls finished in childhood, for, if they play with ideas again, it is amid hatred and malice.

The poem "A Prayer for My Daughter" is a manifesto of Yeats's personal ideas in old age of settled life with a home and established status. The word 'Ceremony' is a key word in Yeats and in the books of courtesy.

THE FOURTH PHASE (1928-1935):

The fourth phase, which opens with The Tower is the richest and maturest of his poetic phases. Yeats was settled as a man of family and established poetic reputation. The purchase of 'Thoor Ballylee' near Coole Park and the rebuilding of the old tower brought him in the rank of the landed aristocrats and gave him a status. He had become a Nobel Laureate (1923) and a senator of the Irish Free State. This brought a sense of rootedness and his poetry of the period is dominated at once by his 'System', which was finalised in 1925; by a greater realism and earthiness and by his growing concern with the problem of age and the attitude appropriate to it.

Yeats himself had admitted that there was an excess of bitterness in the poems of this phase for which there were two obvious reasons -
his illness in 1927 which brought him to the brink of death; and the terror of the British forces of repression, The Black and Tans, as well as of the Irish Civil War, which were posing a real threat to all the artistic and aristocratic values which he prized dearly. Under this period fall the following works:

1) The Tower (1928)
2) The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933)
3) A Full Moon in March (1935)

The Tower (1928) opens with the characteristic poem "Sailing to Byzantium" which is an emphatic reminder of his keen interest in that historic city of Eastern Empire and the significance Yeats attached to its art and culture, which is specified by him in an oft-quoted passage in A Vision:

"I think that in early Byzantium, may be never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architects and artificers spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminators of sacred book, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject matter and the vast design of a whole people ... to weave all into a vast design, the work of many what seemed the work of one".
Yet behind the physical Byzantium which is vividly conceived, there is present the symbolical city of the Unity of Being, the Kingdom of artistic imagination and 'monuments of unageing intellect'. The poet of aged body troubled with desires, is on a mental voyage out of his native country, which is given over to youth and sensual pleasures. The poem "Sailing to Byzantium" reflects the interest in Byzantine art felt by Yeats since his visit to Ravenna, a city whose churches contain the finest of all Byzantine mosaics. Yeats saw in Byzantine culture what he called the "Unity of being", a State in which art and life interpenetrated each other. Rejected by the cruel world of birth, generation and death as obsolete, the poet determines to sail to a place where he will be appreciated, namely Byzantium. He hopes that he will thus be able to defeat time, because art is timeless. He wants to sail from sensual music made by the birds - that "dying generation" - to the ethereal music made by the Byzantine birds of hammered gold and gold enamelling. Yet, inspite of the fervour of his resolution, this is a poem of regret, uncertainty and the rootlessness that follows rejection.

"The Tower" is a very powerful and impressive poem written by Yeats. It is a poem which reflects the conscious and deliberate effort of will and intelligence that went into Yeats's ordering of his experience. At the same time, the poem is a passionately honest
statement of Yeats's frustration at the approach of old age. But old age is not the only theme of the poem. Another major theme is failure in love. He feels how it affects the future course of a man's life. Yet another theme is the rejection of abstract thought represented by Plato and Plotinus in favour of more concrete things. All these themes are admirably brought out and yet made an integral part of the texture of the poem.

The leading theme of this poem is the feeling that the poet is becoming physically weak every day. But though he is becoming physically weak, his passions (both political and personal) are getting stronger every day. In his youth Yeats had read Blake and in one of the letters of Blake there was a reference to old age: "I have been very near the gates of death; and have returned very weak, and an old man feeble and tattering, but not in spirits and life, not in the real man, the imagination which liveth forever, in what I am stronger and stronger as this foolish body decays". This description was equally true of Yeats as well. He sat in his Tower, brooding over his old age and surveyed the entire scene about him.

"Meditations in Time of Civil War" is based on Yeats's own experiences at Thoor Ballylee during the fighting between the Republicans and the Free Staters which broke out in the summer of 1921. Although in a sense a political poem, its political content is subordinate to Yeats's exploration of the nature of the poet's role in violent times. The poem begins with a statement of the frightening
possibility that all the social values cherished by him are, in these anarchic times, obsolete and irrelevant. Thus buildings which once symbolised a noble, heroic way of life are insignificant if the great grandson of that house be but a mouse. Yeats goes on to say that, if this is the case, if a former way of life which had inspired poets like him is indeed outmoded, then he can have no other function than to express poetically "befitting emblems of adversity". He next reflects on the significance of a medieval Japanese sword given to him by a Japanese friend. Such a work of art, produced by an "aching heart" is more than an emblem of adversity. In Sato's sword, art has produced something permanent and combative. Sato's sword, one of Yeats's most cherished possessions, encourages him at this moment of doubt, but when he actually meets, on the road at his door, the soldiers of the civil war, he again feels envy; he feels that he is a mere dreamer compared with these men of action. These misgivings are beautifully expressed in the sixth section of the poem. The last section of the poem offers three visions. The first, a vision of hatred, is an image of gigantic violence, a mob, "trooper belabouring trooper". The second vision is that of noble ladies mounted on pure white unicorns. The third vision is that of civilization on the brink of collapse. In the last stanza, Yeats celebrates occult investigations of "demonic images". The different sections of this poem are linked partly by the poet's personality and partly by his sense of history.
Yeats wrote quite a few poems which bring in violence as a theme. "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" is among the most powerful of such poems. In this poem there is a powerful poetic comment not only on the Irish situation of Yeats's times but also on violence in general. At the same time, the poem expresses the mood of disenchantment and lament very admirably. Also, his comments on the horrors of war and the degradation of human nature are very appealing and effective. In this way, "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" becomes not only a precise picture of the Irish Civil War but also of the longer international destruction of which it was an advance indication.

"Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" shapes itself out of Yeats's thoughts upon the change created by the violence which followed the 1916 Rising. The poem concludes with a tumult of images, of violence culminating in the horror of the witch and demon.

"Leda and the Swan" is Yeats's interpretation of the Greek myth concerning the rape of Leda, a mortal beauty, by Zeus, who assumed the form of a swan for this purpose. In the author's note Yeats observed:

"I wrote Leda and the Swan because the editor of a political review asked me for a poem. I thought, 'After the individualist, demagogic movement, founded by Hobbes and popularized by the Encyclopaedists and the French Revolution, we have a soil so exhausted that it cannot grow that crop again for centuries. Then I thought nothing is now possible
but some movement from above preceded by some violent annunciation'. My fancy began to play with Leda and the Swan for metaphor, and I began this poem; but as I wrote, Bird and Lady took such possession of the scene that all politics went out of it and my friend tells me that 'his conservative readers would misunderstand the poem'.

Thus Leda and the Swan is connected with the 'Second Coming' where the antithetical civilization, which would replace the present effete one, is symbolized by a beast with human face, indicative of the pagan nature of the new dispensation. Now the old pagan civilization, which preceded Christianity, was ushered into being by the sexual union of Zeus, in the form of swan, and Leda, a commingling of God, man and beast. This is how Yeats interpreted the classical myth:

"I imagine the annunciation that founded Greece as made to Leda, remembering that they showed in a Spartan temple, stung up to roof, a holy relic, the unhatched eggs of hers and from one of her eggs come love and from the other war. But all things are from antithesis, and when in my ignorance I try to imagine what older civilization that annunciation rejected I can but see bird and woman blotting out some corner of the Babylonian mathematical Star light".

The poem dramatically presents in a graphic manner the story of Leda and the Swan from the Greek mythology. According to it, Leda was
the mother of Helen. Leda was raped by the god Zeus, in disguise of a swan. Consequent upon this sexual copulation of the superhuman (Zeus) and the human (Leda) were born the great heroes and heroines who laid the foundation of a way of living called the Athenian civilisation and whose exploits have been narrated in the great Homeric epics. Leda gave birth to Helen who was responsible for the Trojan War. She also gave birth to Clytemnestra who brought about the tragedy of Agamemnon. The copulation of Zeus and Leda, in other words, set in motion a train of events which resulted in the destructive Trojan War and the various events narrated in the great Aeschylian tragedies. This Greek mythological story of Leda and Zeus forms the theme of the poem "Leda and the Swan".

"Among School Children" was composed by Yeats in 1926. When Yeats composed this poem he was a member of the Irish Senate and a successful public figure. The poem was composed after the poet's visit to a convent school at Waterford, Ireland. As he entered the school, he was received by an old nun Rev. Mother Pilomena who conducted him through different classes. The children in the classes looked at wonder at the sixty year old smiling public man. At the sight of the school children, he is reminded of Maud Gonne as she must have been at school in her childhood. "A stifled nostalgic sigh works as the prevailing understone and gives a tragic solemnity to the whole picture".
Yeats's faith in magic and witchcraft is seen at its best in his exalted poem "All Souls' Night", originally published as an epilogue to A Vision. All Souls' Night falls on Nov. 2 and is dedicated by the Christian Church to the remembrance of the departed souls and prayers for their peace and tranquillity in purgatory. A ghost of fine element can at least taste the fume of the wine. The poet summons this ghostly audience - William Thomas Horton, Florence Farr and Mac Gregor Mathers - whose mind and thoughts are inseparable like Egyptian mummies wrapped in cloths, in order to tell them of his secret philosophy, which the living may mock at but their sober ears will entertain.

The poems of the volume The Winding Stair and Other Poems were being composed and arranged in a design. Yeats was severely ill and saw death to its bone and many of them deal with Time and Death so as to conquer them and the final attitude which is affirmed in clear and emphatic terms is the acceptance of life as something holy, whose every object has the poet's blessing.

The poem "Death" was inspired by the murder of Kelvin O'Higgins an Irish patriot and politician and friend of the poet, who faced his assassins manfully. The poem opens with a general remark that animals take death as an accident in their natural life, entertaining neither fear of extinction nor hope of rebirth, at its approach. But man, who looks before and after, weaves round death all his dreams about next
life and the labyrinth of birth and death in which the soul is lost as a dancer round the wheel of time.

In the last six lines he becomes more particular eventhough the person celebrated is introduced vaguely as a great man. It means his friend was a type of brave and heroic souls who laugh at the assassins to scorn, because they have a full understanding of the real nature of Death, which is mere cessation of breath and which may assume any shape in the light of dying man's attitude to it. If he is a brave man, death is a thing of no consequence, but if he is a coward, Death becomes a terror - 'cowards die many times before their death, but the valiant taste of death but once'. The soul itself creates life and death; if so, it has the power to destroy both.

This brings us to the dramatic poem, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" the moot-point being the rejection of human life as opposed to the acceptance of it and the key symbols are Tower, representing the contemplation of heavenly realities and the Sword covered in a sheath, decorated with the tattered finery of a courtlady's dress, representing the untarnished purity and vigour of mind, blended with the love and desires of a decaying body. Ultimately, the soldier repudiates the saint and love of life triumphs over the final deliverance of the soul from the web of birth and death. In this poem, his soul calls Yeats up the winding Stair, towards heaven and away from
life. Here, says the soul, all contradictions and perplexities will be resolved. But the answer of his self to this is triumphant assertion of the worth of life. The poem is an acceptance of life. Even though the poet is old he pins his faith in the emotions of his youth. He accepts "the crime of death and birth". This is the acceptance of life, his faith in the pagan joy of world, a world in which lived such heroines of the heart as Maud Gonne. How could he leave this life?

The poem "Coole Park, 1929" states Yeats's artistic and human values. Lady Gregory had sold Coole Park to the Forest Department two years before, though she had continued to occupy it. In the poem, Lady Gregory emerges as the embodiment of traditional social and spiritual values which had provided stability for so long. Although the house itself cannot endure for ever, the values it represents shall endure.

While "Coole Park, 1929" is written in a hopeful and optimistic mood, this mood is modified in the next poem "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931" in which the cruel erosion of time is seen as a challenge to poets. Lady Gregory and Yeats were the last romantics who celebrated the beauty and piety sanctified by the old tradition of their country. They wrote the book of the people, the impersonal art which expresses and glorifies the whole community. This was the Homeric tradition which has now been discarded. Times are now changed and the swan, which was once proudly and radiantly flying through the brilliant sky,
a symbol of lofty joy, is now drifting upon the darkening lake, emblematic of modern pessimism which Yeats disliked.

"Byzantium" is apparently a sequel to the "Sailing to Byzantium" which was composed four years earlier. A letter written by Yeats to Sturge Moore on October 4, 1930 gives the following genesis of the poem:

"The poem originates from a criticism of yours. You objected to the last verse of 'Sailing to Byzantium' because a bird made by a goldsmith was just as natural as anything else. That showed me that the idea needed exposition". The two poems have many points of superficial similarity. In both the poems the central object is the Dome of St. Sophia at Byzantium, with other details and images that are common. Both are the poems of escape from a world of flux to a kingdom of permanence and in both the poet is trying to solve a personal problem. In the first he seeks to quell the desires troubling his heart in old age, while in the second he 'wanted to warm himself back to life' after a severe illness which brought him very close to death.

Yet the poems are fundamentally different from each other: The Byzantium of the first poem is that of about A.D. 550. In the second poem it is that of about A.D. 1000. In the poem "Byzantium", Byzantium is not the capital city of the Eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire but a "country of the mind", transcendental place outside time and space. It is beyond the world.
Yeats was wearied of old age and had recovered from illness. These Byzantium poems were prompted by his knowledge and study of the actual Byzantine art, his desire to escape from this world which was unfit for the old to a world of permanent art and culture, from a physical world to a spiritual and intellectual world. Whether prompted by history or by vision, W.B. Yeats writes:

"I think if I could be given a month of antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato. I think I could find in some little wine shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions .... I think that in early Byzantium, may be never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one".

[A Vision, 1937, P.279]

In the first notes for this poem Yeats had written in his 1930 diary: "Describe Byzantium as it is in the system towards the end of the first Christian millennium. A walking mummy, flames at the street corners where the soul is purified, birds of hampered gold singing in the golden trees, in the harbour offering their backs to the wailing dead that they may carry them to paradise". Giorgio Melchiori continues,
"Byzantium is a contemplation of death - or rather of the ideal state of death. The metre adopted is significant from this point of view. While 'Sailing' was in the eight line stanza form common to many meditative poems of Yeats, "Byzantium" adopts the metre that Yeats used only in his most deeply felt poems of death and birth, the stanza patterned on that of Cowley's elegy for Mr. William Harvey and used first in the poem for the death of Major Gregory". 1

"Byzantium" is Yeats's most esoteric and obscure poem.

The poem in the silence of the night when the great gong of St.Sophia has announced the time appropriate to spiritual meditation and divine revelation. The drunken soldiers of the Emperor are in their beds. The noises and images peculiar to the night in a great city, such as the song of night walkers and brawl of the revellers have also melted in the calm atmosphere. The poet is now face to face with the great Dome of St. Sophia, which suddenly assumes the aspect of the sky, bedecked with the light of moon and stars and are looking down upon the human life on the earth with multiplicities, love and hate, strife and confusion, peculiar to the every-day of men and women.

As the poet contemplates the Dome of 'Divine Wisdom' with a secret desire to explore its mysteries, he describes an image floating before him. It is faint and vague, a shadow in comparison with a concrete human body, but an image when compared to a shade. This much is clear that it is one of the spirits from the Land of the Dead, which like the 'Sages in God's holy fire in 'Sailing to Byzantium' can retrace their steps (unwind the winding path) and come to the earth, which they have left behind. They have become purged of the memories of earthly life which were woven round them like the 'mummy cloths' round the Egyptian mummies or the skein of thread round the bobbin. This spirit with a mouth without moisture or breath can summon other ghosts from Hades. The poet needs a guide to lead him to the various regions of the kingdom of the dead. Such a guidance was prescribed by all the mystic and occult systems. Wilson quotes the following warning from the Golden Dawn:

"Under no circumstances should the Seer wander alone; he should always wait until one of these elemental beings or guides appears, or until he obtains the sense that one is present."  

The poet hails the superhuman guide, who is antithetical to man, living the life of man's death and the death of man's life and starts on his pilgrimage under the felt presence of this spirit.

The third stanza presents the vision of heaven and the golden bird here, more a 'miracle' than 'an artifice' planted on the star-lit golden branch of the mystic tree, is a purified soul. It is a bird not made by the hand of man, but hammered into shape on the divine smithy in purgatory. The golden tree is the mystic tree whether of Kabbala, where souls or angels have their place, or the Tree of Life in the Christian heaven as described by Rossetti in his 'Blessed Damozel', where the blessed souls and angels reside and the Holy Ghost sometimes settles in the form of a Dove. This bird, like the Cock in Hades, the classical kingdom of the Dead, may cry for a rebirth in the human world if the soul so desires or scorning the conflict and confusion of the human world.

The fourth stanza unrolls the spectacle of purgatory, where the souls are flitting about like flames of fire, which is unearthly. It is the unearthly fire of purgatory which no storm can disturb and which purges the soul into the likeness of flame as described by Dante in his Divine Comedy. To this place of purgation come the spirits from the human world (Blood-begotten) and undergo the process of the gradual liberation through 'dreaming back'. This dreaming back is represented by a dance which, at times, is marked by 'an agony of trance', where the soul burns in the internal fire of remorse. This fire of agony
which consumes the spirits is internal, not external, it burns the heart of the sinner but cannot burn 'a sleeve'.

In the last stanza the poet has reached the brink of purgatory and can catch a clear view of the vast ocean of time - and - bound life through which 'blood begotten' spirits are seen moving forward on the backs of dolphins, the proverbial escorts of souls to the kingdom of the dead. The flood of life beats upon the borders of 'the smithy', where the souls are purged and shaped and the water of life cannot penetrate; while, on the marble floor, where the souls, 'dance in an agony of trance' they are gradually divested of 'that flaming shirt', that agonising and cohesive stain of the fury, passion and lust of life which human hand cannot remove. These dancing images are begetting fresh images of their life experiences in the process of 'dreaming back'. Each memory comes back as an image in a dream. In the last line the poet has come back to the shores of the ocean of life, which is agitated by the conflicting claims of flesh (dolphin-torn) and spirit (gong-tormented), the extremities between which the mortal man swings like a pendulum.

As the title indicates the poem 'Vacillation' deals with the polarities or antimonies, the life of sense and the life of spirit, material duties and mystic visitations, between which the poet moves without a final commitment to any one of them. These antimonies are
destroyed only by the sudden shaft which the body calls death and the heart 'remorse'. If life is subject to these polarities, what will be the source of joy?

The second part describes this joy. Human life can be imaged as the mystic tree which is half fiery and half-green, symbolising the physical and spiritual spheres between which man has to make his choice. The green symbolises the abundance of generation and the fiery half represents the spiritual meditation in which this sensuous life is consumed. The artist is like the priest of Attis in the old ritual who hung the image of the god upon the mystic tree. This was the old way of reconciling the opposites and getting release from them in an ecstasy peculiar to the priest or the saint. The artist also can effect a similar reconciliation and experience a mystic joy which he cannot utter in words. The hanging of Attis image was a prefiguration of Crucifixion, which reconciled death and life and yield to the priest a moment of ecstasy a glimpse of the 'sphere' beyond the 'gyres'.

Richard Ellmann has neatly summed up the whole point:

"To hang the image of Attis between the two sides of the tree was to give up one's hopes for normal experience and to become one with god, thereby achieving a reconcilement of the antimonies. He who sacrifices himself in this way 'may know not what he knows', because
such knowledge is not susceptible of intellectual formation, but he knows the ecstatic state of not grief which may be called joy.1

The third part swings to the opposite extreme and urges the poet to get all the gold and silver he can; gratify his ambition and cram his common every day life with worldly activities, yet should spare time: All women love the idle man as he can give them his leisure, while the children desire wealth and status; consequently few can fully enjoy the love of women and the gratitude of children.

But when man has reached his fortieth year he must extricate himself from the toils of the sensuous life. He must prepare himself for facing death proudly, laughingly and with unflinching courage. The worth of all his work must be judged by this standard.

In the fourth part the poet is anxious to show that even the ordinary affairs of life may provide moments of spiritual vision and ecstasy.

The last part follows a brief dialogue between the Soul and the Heart, representing the contraries of human life. The Soul urges the poet to renounce the earthly things which are mere appearances and trust the grace divine, the biblical coal of prophet Isaiah, symbol of spiritual inspiration which purges the vision. He must rise above the complexities of 'blood and mire' and become the pure soul, which lives

in the elements of fire, free from the coils of birth and death. To this the heart replies that man's earthly life is the centre of his poetic effort and the great poet, Homer, was a pagan and glorified the sinful mortals with heroic hearts. The poet belongs to his tribe and prefers earth to heaven to keep the fountain of poetry brimful of vital waters. The point is clinched up in the final section where the poet encounters the Catholic scholar, Baron Friedrich Von Hugel, who was an advocate of Christianity as the most fruitful source of artistic vision. The poet argues that he believes with him in the miracles of the saints and honours their sanctity. His heart may find consolation in life and peace in his grave if he were to choose the Christian way of life; but it seems destiny has committed him to the way of Homer, the pagan poet whose art was a flower blooming in the mortal soil of the world. The Bible speaks of the lion and the honey-comb, which the pagan poet acquires from his contact with the world, the strength of lion and the sweetness of honey - all the glory and pathos of human life. So Von Hugel is dismissed with the poet's blessing.

Another important poem in this volume is "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop", where the unity of love, physical and spiritual, is stressed, even though one is regarded by the Bishop as foul and the other as fair. The Bishop tells Jane that in her old age she must give up her beastly traffic in sex and set her heart upon the mansion of God. Jane replies that her heart has taught her a different wisdom; fair and foul
are near of kin; and the great tent of love, whose top touches the sky, is pitched in the soul sexual organs. Physical love, thus, is a part and parcel of spiritual love and a woman, proud and still though she may look, has to lie down to experience that love and allow herself to be 'torn' by her lover because without this 'tearing' operation she cannot achieve the fullness of life and self-realization.

This volume ends with the poem "The Dolphic Oracle upon Plotinus", in praise of a philosopher, Plotinus. Yeats sees Plotinus as having resisted the temptation to escape from life into the bland detachment of philosophy. Plotinus is immersed in human problems so that his is a human rather than a transcendental philosophy. Philosophy need not be ethereal. The idea that man is at once a creature bound by Time and the flux of the world and an inheritor of the imperishable substance of Eternity, which is his permanent abode finds a vivid expression in this philosophical poem. Wilson quotes the following extract from an English translation of the original Greek verses:

"Oft-times when you strove to rise above the bitter waves of this blood-drenched life, above the sickening whirl, toiling in the mid-most of the rushing flood and the unimaginable turmoil, oft-times, from the Ever Blessed, there was shown to you the term still close at hand ... But now that you have cast the screen aside, quitted the Tomb that held
your lofty soul, you enter at once the heavenly consort; where fragrant breezes play, where all is unison and winning, tenderness and guileless joy, and the place is lavished of the nectar stream the unfailing Gods bestow, with the brandishments of loves, and delicious airs and tranquil sky. Where Minos and Rhadaman thus dwell, great brethren of the golden race of mighty Zeus where dwells the just Aeacus and Plato, consecrated power, and stately Phythagoras and all else that form the choir of immortal love, there where the heart is ever uplifted in joyous festival. ¹

The poem reproduces many of the key phrases of this translation. Two points in the passage, however, need explanation. Firstly, Plotinus is to join 'the Choir' of the blessed dead as soon as his worldly voyage is over. It means that his soul is not required to undergo that process of 'dreaming back' which is necessary to purge it of its earthly stains. This detachment was granted to the great philosopher in view of his detachment from the worldly concerns during his earthly existence. Secondly, the golden company in the Isle of the blessed consists only of philosophers, musicians and lovers. This fact is based upon a revealing passage in More's commentary which Yeats was very fond of. According to this commentary, the routine of the blessed

¹ F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition (New York, 1958), P.213.
life consisted not only in the rational discourse agreeable to the philosophical palates, 'but innocent Pastimes, in which the Musical and Amorous propension may be also recreated. For these three dispositions are the flower of all the rest, as Plotinus has somewhere noted'.

'Bland Rhadamanthus backonshim' is a significant line in the poem. Plotinus is helped by Rhadamanthus, one of the three judges of the dead, the other two being Minos and Aeacus. According to Plato, Rhadamanthus was the judge of the souls hailing from Asia. That this judge stands ready to welcome Plotinus and cheer him up with his pleasant aspect seems to signify that Plotinus, unlike Plato and other Greek philosophers, was influenced by Christianity, which in Yeats's 'System' represented the 'turbulence of the bestial floor', the fabulous darkness of Asia. This is supported by the last line of the first stanza in the poem: 'Salt blood blocks his eyes', which means that Plotinus was not above the reach of the complexity of blood and mire and the contagion of the world, which he, however, strove hard to put at arm's length.

A FULL MOON IN MARCH (1935):-

This is a brief collection which Yeats was inclined to underrate despite his preference for a few single poems in it. By 1934 he

apprehended that the poetic vein in him was nearly exhausted and only a miracle could restore his old fire and energy. He, therefore, underwent the Steinach operation and the monkey glands wrought the miracle. He felt a sudden accession of vigour and creative energy which remained unflagging till his dying day, and produced an output of lyrics and ballads in the last phase which astonished and shocked the reader with their frank and unabashed glorification of the body and the pleasures of the senses. The present selection is dominated by political themes, especially Yeats's flirtations with the rising Fascism, which fortunately proved to be abortive.

"Parnell's Funeral" is the second poem on Parnell, the great Irish politician and patriot, who died heart-broken as the result of malicious campaigns launched by his own compatriots for his suspected liaison with a married woman. Yeats seeks to glorify him as the norm of political sagacity needed to control the mobocracy and demagogy of the present age.

The second poem "Ribh Denounces Patrick" is an elaboration of Ribh's philosophy of Sex in relation to the orthodox Christian concept of Trinity, the three aspects of Divinity, as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Ribh denounces this concept as 'an abstract Greek absurdity' because it is all male, there being no female in it. The
concept is contrary to all the natural and supernatural stories, in as much as in all such stories the core consists of man, woman and child.

The brief poem "There" refers to the perfect unity of Heaven or the perfection of God where all the imperfections, antimonies, angularities and multiplicities of the earth are finally resolved. It is the stillness above the flux of the world, the perfect circle where the broken arcs of earthly existence find their completion.

The poem "Ribh Considers Christian Love Insufficient" is a more complex poem based on the paradoxical idea that the hatred of God finally throws the soul into the lap of God. It is stated in the poem that hatred is as essential as love to know God.

The last section of the poem is "Meru" named after India's Holy Mountain which is a symbol of the final stage of spiritual discipline in the pilgrimage of the mystic or seer when he is able to intuit the nature of the Supreme reality. The poem is a fruit of Yeats's contact with Shri Purohit Swami and of his investigations of Indian thought while preparing his introduction to the Swami's translation of Bhagwan Shri Hansh's The Holy Mountain, the description of an initiate's spiritual ascent on Mount Kailash in Tibet. The poem "Meru" expresses Yeats's idea that search for an
all-inclusive reality must be an unending and continuing one, each age undoing what a previous age had done.

THE LAST POEMS (1935-1939):

The so called Last Poems of W.B. Yeats are actually compounded of two separate collections, The New Poems, published in 1938, during the poet's life time: and the Last Poems and Two Plays, published in July 1939. In 1940 the poems of the two collections were combined in one volume and the reshuffling resulted in a serious damage to the poet's own design, which he has been anxious to define and fabricate all his life.

There is an interesting statement in Yeats's poem "A Prayer for Old Age", which is quite pertinent to the tone of many of the last poems:

"God guard me from those thoughts men think
In the mind alone;
He that sings a lasting song
Thinks in a marrow-bone;
I pray - for fashion's word is out
And prayer comes round again --
That I may seem, though I die old
A foolish, passionate man."
On the whole it may be stated that the last poems are quite worthy of the vigorous old age of a poet who devoted practically his whole life to the service of the Muses and coveted no other crown but that which they alone can bestow. The section opens with the poem "The Gyres" which presents the old poet's reaction to the murderousness of his times, which is symptomatic of the impending dissolution of the current European civilization. In this way the poem is linked with "Second Coming", "Meditations in the Time of Civil War" and "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen". What is new in the poem is the poet's mood. Yeats would have us believe that the new mood is the result of the deeper insight into the nature of the historical rhythm which the years have engendered in him:

When a man grows old his joy
Grows more deep, day after day,
His empty heart is full at length,
But he has need of all that strength
Because of the increasing night
That opens her mystery and fright.

The poet has donned here a prophetic mask which is invoked as 'Old Rocky Face'. The image has puzzled the critics and evoked a wide variety of interpretation, which is indicated in the following extract:
"Some years ago T.R. Henn suggested that the source of the Rocky Face might be a carving on the wall of Thoor Ballylee, Yeats's Tower; the conceit is attractive. Having climbed the winding stair to the roof of the Tower, as Dante climbed the winding upward path on the mountain of Purgatory, the poet achieves apotheosis as the sculpted image. The Tower, Yeats tells us, symbolises the mind looking out upon men and events, the Cave, the mind looking inward upon itself; in "The Gyres" the Rocky Face looks out - like a face on Thoor Ballylee over the time-ridden world of Cyclical change, while the voice from the cave (in a related significance, time considered as eternal recurrence) bids him rejoice in achieved liberation from the pressure of mere transitoriness".1

The Rocky Face is a composite mask of the poet himself, who wrote:

"As we approach the phoenix's nest the old classes, with their power of co-ordinating events, evaporate, the mere multitude is everywhere with its empty photographic eyes. Yet we who have hated the age are joyous and happy. The new discipline wherever enforced or thought will recall forgotten beautiful faces".

(On the Boiler: P.25)

The prophetic poet contemplating the violence and confusion prevailing in the world, is convinced that the life-gyre of the present civilization has reached the highest point of its expansion and its collapse is near at hand. But instead of being stunned or terrified by the impending catastrophe announced by the speedy destruction of the old values and ideals, he is exhilarated by it and offers it a joyful welcome. The old Rocky Face, a sculptured stone head, symbolises the poet's inner consciousness, skillness in the centre of Time's flux and the impassive gaze of the poet. The poet stands aloof like the Rocky Face, links up the present with the past years of history and sees physical and moral downfall. But the poet does not give way to pessimism. Rooted in his philosophy of the cyclic process of history and revolution of the gyres, the poet is sure that what has been, must be born again, and the old values he loves are sure to revive, for,

The workman, noble and saint, and all things run,

On the unfashionable gyre again.

"Lapis Lazuli", written in July, 1936, is one of the best compositions of Yeats's old age. The poem was inspired by a piece of Chinese Sculpture sent to him by Harry Clipston.

The tragic exaltation of gaiety is the dominant theme of this poem. This is also the theme of "The Gyres", the first poem of the
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volume Last Poems. Tragic gaiety is the theme of the last poems, 
"We that look on but laugh in tragic joy". It is 'tragic' because time ravages everything, even art. It is 'gaiety' because destruction carries within itself the impetus to construct. The joy arises not from callousness, from an awareness of the permanence of the best aspects of humanity, inspite of its apparent destruction. Joy and gaiety run through the whole process. The second stanza of the poem takes up the word 'gay' and explains the meaning of the 'tragic gaiety' of the artist, which is born of a deeper insight into the nature of tragedy. In the Poetics Aristotle makes the positive statement that tragedy, as an art form must yield delight peculiar to it which reminds us of equally significant remark of Yeats himself in 'On the Boiler'.

"The arts are all the bridal chambers of joy. No tragedy is legitimate unless it leads some great character to his final joy. Polonius may go out wretchedly, but I can hear the dance music in 'Absent thee from felicity a while', or in Hamlet's speech over the dead Ophelia, and what of Cleopatra's last farewell. Lear's rage under the lightning, Oedipus sinking down at Story's end into an earth riven by love? Some Frenchman has said that farce is the struggle against a ridiculous object, comedy against a movable object, tragedy against an immovable; and because the will, or energy, is greatest in tragedy, tragedy is the more noble; but I add that 'will or energy' is eternal delight, and when its limit is
reached it may become a pure aimless joy, though the man, the shade, still mourns his lost object". (P.35)

This is practically the substance of the second stanza which refers to the great Shakespearean tragic figures who walk proudly on the stage to play their roles and if they are worthy of their noble part, they will never break the line to sweep and lament over their fate. The actors and actresses, creating these roles on the stage, must know that the great tragic heroes, Hamlet and Lear are gay and this gaiety of their heart has transformed all the horror of the dark event about to engulf them. Step by step these tragic heroes are deprived of all their possessions and their noble aspirations and a pall of darkness envelops them. But out of this darkness issues the light which illuminates their soul. The progress of a tragic hero is a march from darkness into light, from ignorance unto knowledge, from the surface of suffering unto the joy hidden in its bosom. The tragic artist takes his stand upon the integrity of the heroic individual but does not cease to be an individual. The whole tragedy of the race is concentrated in the tragedy of an individual, pitched to the highest possible limit, so that thousands of tragedies taking place on thousands of the stages in the real world cannot add a jot to its intensity. Hamlet and Lear may go mad and become hysterical, but their hysteria is radically different from that of the 'hysterical women' because it is the 'delirium of the brave' as
distinguished from the emotional collapse of the multitude. Edward Engelbury has well commented:

"In this most assertive poem, Yeats sets the individual tragic impulse against the 'public spirit' of the body politic. Sometimes the Greeks would use their chorus for voicing the spirit; it balanced the tragic hero. 'When Oedipus speaks out of the most vehement passions he is conscious of the presence of the chorus, men before whom he must keep up appearances ... (men) who do not share his passion'. Hysteria is passion socialized, the tragic hero never submits to it".1

"The Three Bushes" tells a story about a woman who shrank from a total involvement in life. This woman, wishing to save herself from what she considers would be the degradation of sexual love, substitutes her chamber maid for herself in her lover's bed at night. This plan seems to work up to a point. However, when her lover dies accidentally, she too dies; her death is due to shock or more probably to remorse, 'for she loved him with her soul'. They were buried side by side and their graves properly looked after by the chamber-maid who survived long and could witness the two bushes planted over the two graves, mingling into one as if they had grown out of a common root. As she lay on her death-bed she confessed everything to the old priest, who was a generous and kindly soul and

understood the meaning of her story. So after her death he commanded her to be buried beside her lady's lover 'and set a rose tree' on her grave. In the course of time the rose tree was so intricately entangled with the two older bushes as to become an inseparable part of one composite tree with them.

"An Acre of Grass" written in November, 1936, is the first personal lyric in this final collection. The old poet here refers to the conventional idea of the peaceful life when the strength of body has declined. He can pass his quiet days with 'book and picture' which are enough to recreate his mind, just as an acre of green grass can provide him space enough for exercise to keep the body going on. He should sit in his old house, meditate in the stillness of midnight where the stirring of a mouse alone can disturb the quiet place.

This 'quiet' at the end of life is certainly a strong temptation. The time warrants neither wild flights of imagination in the dreamland nor that philosophical activity of the mind which is busy organizing and ordering the thoughts, impressions and impulses which constitute its raw material. Both these activities are futile to discover wisdom and truth.
The poet contemptuously rejects the conventional picture of the quiet old age. He prays for 'the old man's frenzy', the passionate energy which drives a man on and on and allows him not even a moment's rest. The poet expresses his desire to follow the example of those - Timon, Lear, William Blake and Michael Angelo - who retained their creative frenzy in their old age. Inspite of oldage, he has a right to experience the whole of life.

The poem "The Municipal Gallery Revisited", written in September 1937, was occasioned by Yeats's desire to make a suitable return to a group of Irish American admirers who were raising funds for the poet to make the passage of his life smooth in his old age. In a speech before the Irish Academy of Letters, on August 17, 1937, Yeats said: "I think, though I cannot yet be sure, that a good poem is forming in my head - a poem that I can send them. A poem about the Ireland that we have served --

For a long time I had not visited the Municipal Gallery. I went there a week ago and was restored to my friends. I sat down after a few minutes, overwhelmed with emotion. There were pictures painted by men, now dead, who were once my intimate friends. There were the portraits of fellow workers; there was the portrait of Lady Gregory, by Mancini, which John Synge thought the greatest portrait since Rembrandt; there was John Synge himself; there, too, were the
portraits of our statesmen, the events of the last thirty years in fine pictures; a peasant ambush, the trail of Roger Casement, a pilgrimage to Lough Derg, event after event. Ireland not as is displayed in guide book or history, but, Ireland seen because of the magnificent vitality of her painters, in the glory of her passions.

For the moment I could think of nothing but that Ireland: that great pictured song”.

In this poem, Yeats looks at the paintings which give some idea of his and Ireland’s past. He recognises that what he is looking at is “an Ireland / The poets have imagined, terrible and gay”. He praises the political heroes whose devotion to Ireland had moved him - Roger Casement, Arthur Griffith and Kelvin O' Higgins. Then he goes on to speak of the persons who had influenced his own life - 1) Maud Gonne, "beautiful and gentle in her Venetian Way"; 2) Lady Gregory whose life had been so rich that no artist could have captured "all that pride and that humility" 3) Hugh Lane, "Onlie-begetter" of the collection of paintings in the Municipal Gallery and 4) John Synge "that rooted man". Lady Gregory and John Synge especially, says Yeats, had helped to shape the artistic belief which has guided his work. This aesthetic belief is that great art must be aristocratic in spirit yet rooted in the life of the people and that it "must come from contact with the soil".
Finally Yeats asks the reader who would judge him to judge not just his poetry, but go to the Municipal Gallery so as to get impression of the human and social context of his poetry. Yeats himself admitted that it was one of the best poems written by him.

The last poems of Yeats are dominated by the poet's preoccupation with sculpture, especially the Greek statutory which originated in Egypt and was brought to Greece by Ionian traders. In the course of time it blended with the Dorian influence and reached perfection in the works of Phidias. Then it followed the conquest of Alexander the Great and influenced the style of the Western Asian countries and had the second period of flowering in Byzantine art. "The Statues", in fact, marks the culmination of Yeats's ever-growing interest in this art in which fixity and motion are blended and dreams of beauty and heroism find their living incarnation.

The essence of the argument is given by Yeats himself in the following observation:

"There are moments when I am certain that art must once again accept those Greek proportions which carry into plastic art the pythagorean numbers, those faces which are divine because all there is empty and measured. Europe had not born when Greek galleys defeated the Persian borders at Salamis, but when the Doric studios
sent out those broad-backed marble statues against the multifiform, vague, expressive Asiatic sea; they gave to the sexual instinct of Europe its goal, its fixed type."

(On the Boiler, P.37).

"The Statues" is one of Yeats's most difficult poems, both in thought and language. Yeats here makes use of three kinds of statues to reconcile differences between eastern and western philosophy - Phidias's Greek figures, a statue of the Buddha and the statue of Cuchulain. The poem begins by mentioning public incomprehension or criticism of the Greek objective art. People stare at such art and say that it lacks character. But the Greek boys and girls could respond to Greek sculpture by pressing against them their animate lips. Their passion could bring character enough. But, says Yeats in the second stanza, it is not the boys and girls, not even Pythagoras, who brought that passion to the statues in the first place and in whom final greatness therefore resides. That greatness is in the artists or the Greek sculptors, Phidias in particular. It is the men who give body to the abstract system, the creative workers, who make any system meaningful. It was the Greek sculptors, symbolising the Greek ideal, who really defeated the Persian army at Salamis. In the third stanza, Yeats seems to say that these Greek ideals also influenced Asian art, and
that the compulsive attractions of the statue of the Buddha can be attributed to its Greek-like objectivity. Europe, he says, has lost this objectivity in art, as becomes clear if the Buddha is compared with the ultimate symbol of European subjectivity. The last stanza attempts to account for the heroic possibilities of Ireland. This stanza suggests that objective art based on intellect, calculation, number and measurement, has begun once to have a decisive and shaping influence on modern Europe. This influence is represented by the Irish nation which was inspired to the Easter Rising by the admiration of Pearse and his followers for the objective figure of Cuchulain. Cuchulain symbolises the refusal to be dominated or limited by outside forces. Through an objective art, Ireland can lift itself above the formless subjectivity of modern life and achieve its national destiny. Commenting on the poem Richard Ellmann wrote:

"He had embodied the Asian point of view in the poem 'Meru' and he now wrote 'The Statues' as a European, performing an astonishing and masterful revaluation of past and present".  

The poem "News for the Delphic Oracle" has been called "a laughing, crying, sacred song, a leching song". The poem has a deeper significance which becomes apparent not at first reading but

at the second and careful reading of the lyric. On the Island of Delphi near Greece was the famous temple of Apollo. The priestess of the temple, inspired by the gods, could utter profound truths and foretell the future. In Porphyro's *Life of Plotinus*, we are told that after the death of the great philosopher Plotinus, his friends went to the Oracle of Delphi to know from her whereabouts of their friend. They were told that the great man had crossed the sea of life and reached Elysium or the Island of the Blessed (in Greek mythology) without having undergone the purification process. In this poem, the poet imagines that he himself has crossed the sea of life and reached the Elysium across it. The poet describes the scene in Elysium or the Island of the Blessed like an eye-witness. He gives his own views on the Island of the Blessed.

The poem "Long-legged fly", written in April, 1938, presents a set of three pictures, of a statesman, a beautiful woman and an artist respectively who are responsible for changing the destiny of a civilization. They rise above the worldly dins and conflicts, attain a poise, symbolic of their unity of being, without which no creation of any significance is possible. In this poem, the Statesman mentioned is Julius Caesar; the beautiful woman mentioned is Helen of Troy and the artist mentioned is Michael Angelo.
The fine poem "A Bronze Head" was the last poem about Maud Gonne written by Yeats. The poem was inspired by the bronze-painted bust of Maud Gonne by Lawrence Campbell in the Dublin Municipal Gallery. In the summer of 1938, Maud Gonne came to visit Yeats at Riversdale and to her immense surprise and pleasure, he said, as she was leaving, "Maud, we should have gone on with our Castle of the Heroes". He wanted Sir William Rothenstein to portray her statuesque old age:

"I wish you find some way of making a drawing of Maud Gonne. No artist has ever drawn her and just now but an air raid that could bring her to London. She might come to see the spectacle".  

The poet stands before the bronze head of his beloved placed at the entrance of the Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin and reflects upon the change wrought by old age on that grand, imperious face. The face still retains its human-superhuman features and round, bird-like eyes, though the rest of the bust is as old, wrinkled and withered as the Egyptian dead bodies preserved in the grave. In A Vision, as critics have noted, Yeats has described the peculiarities of Byzantine ivories.

"Even the drilled pupil of the eye ... undergoes a somnambulistic change, for its deep shadow among the faint lines of tablet, its mechanical circle, where all else is rhythmical and glowing, give to Saint or Angel the look of some great bird starting at miracle".

The poet who knew Maud so intimately analyses her personality, her human and super-human qualities - the sternness and the compulsive passion which motivated her political activity. She seemed to be guided by some divine force to her inexorable destiny. Her bronze bust expressed the ambivalence of her personality. Her face is shrunken and withered, while her eyes are wild and sharp. The poet looked at this decaying world, the loss of ancient traditions and values and wondered if there was anything left which was worth saving. Old age, no doubt, has changed the physical and mental make-up of Maud Gonne, but what the poet points out so vividly is the decline and degradation which has overtaken his country. Perhaps the poet regrets the political activity and agitation of Maud Gonne and her associates which had brought nothing but ruin and degradation to his country. May be that, a divine power is responsible for the country's ruin and Maud Gonne is only a victim or instrument of the pathetic future of her country.
"The Circus Animals' Desertion" was written at some time between November 1937 and September 1938. Yeats, in this poem, is looking back over the poetry which has been his life's work and contrasting the power of his imagination when he was young with its seeming impotence, now he is old. This poem can be regarded as the most judicial of Yeats's final poems. It is an examination of his poetic career. It is a poem about poetry or more precisely about not being able to write poetry. What Yeats is really saying in this poem is that for the artist the problem of construction often becomes more exciting than life itself. In the first part, the poet describes himself as 'a broken man', unable to summon up images as he could in the past. The second part considers especially three of his early works - The Wanderings of Oisin, The Countess Cathleen and On Baile's Strand. The last part of the poem reflects on these 'masterful images' and on the admission that now "I must be satisfied with my heart". It means that his emotions must be his theme in his old age. The poet affirms that Art must be dependent on life. Once the poet has created the emblem and made it complete, it can grow in 'pure mind', i.e., the creator's characters, once fully recognized as human beings, having an independent existence of their own. Those characters must originate, however, in the artist's experience of real life, however artistically unpromising it appears and his imagination is
the ladder by which they climb to their new life. Now in old age, the poet concludes, there is no ladder; the shabby squalid existence which is both human life and his own particular life must itself be the theme of his writing, as he no longer has the power to transform it into poetic imagery.

The short poem "Politics" was written by Yeats a few years before his death. The poem is a blunt and forthright statement of the poet's zest for life, as well as a sigh for vanished youth and physical powers. The poem deals with an important and significant subject - Love versus Politics. There is no development of thought as such in this short poem. The poet as he faces a young girl feels like embracing her. The trouble with him is that he is too old for love. If he were young, he would perhaps have felt the thrill of holding the girl tightly in his arms. Such a situation of love is more immediate and human than the situation of an approaching war or international tension. The common man is not much interested in the power-game of the politicians or of the balance-of-power-diplomacy of such powers. He is interested in enjoying life, in love and the thrill which accompanies it.

The poem "The Black Tower" was composed just a week before the poet's death, i.e. on January 21, 1939 and has about it the 'laziness' of the vision which centres round the mysteries of death. Here we have, in the centre, a dark tower of an absent king, manned only by a small body of resolutely loyal retainers, who
successfully resist the rigour of hunger and poverty and the pressure of the strong temptation of the opposite forces anxious to take complete possession of the old tower. The retainers are sustained by the hope that their old king would surely return one day and put an end to their suspense and torture.

The poem glances at many old legends which Yeats may have had in mind. On a literal plane this could mean one of the high Kings of Cashel, ancient rulers of Ireland, who might come back like Arthur from Avalon to release his people from bondage. On a more and figurative plane it could mean that the dormant spirit of Ireland will awake and inspire the people to attain their former dignity and power. This is made clear by the reference to 'The black pig's dike', described by the poet in 'The Valley of the Black Pig', where the peasants could get visions of great battle to break at last the power of their enemies.

Yeats wrote in one of the tales in the Celtic twilight:

"Presently our talk of war shifted, as it had a way of doing, to the Battle of the Black Pig, which seems to her a battle between Ireland and England, but to me an Armageddon which can quench all things in the Ancestral darkness again".¹

The Irish background is further stressed by the second stanza:

There in the tomb stand the dead upright,
But winds come up from the shore
They shake when the winds roar,
Old bones upon the mountain shake.

John Stallworthy has pointed to a significant passage in Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages of Ireland which was marked with a pencil by Yeats in his personal copy of this book,

"There was also another mode of burial for the warriors. The dead were placed in a standing position, their arms and shield beside them. Thus the heroic king of Munster, slain in battle, was placed in his grave. Mogha Neid lies in his 'Sepulchre' with his javelin by his shoulder, with his club, which was strong in battle, with his helmet, with his sword: long shall he be lamented with deep love, and his absence because of darkest sorrow".¹

"Under Ben Bulben" is not actually the last poem of Yeats, but it is rightly placed at the end of his complete work, because it is Yeats's last will and testament. It gathers up the scenes of his childhood in Sligo and summarizes his pet themes and ideas before it ends with the brave epitaph. The final three lines of

the poem are Yeats's epitaph written by himself. The most striking idea of the poem is Yeats's belief in the power of great poetry or art. Great poetry or art can shape a nation's destiny and can defeat time according to Yeats. The opening stanza proclaims the poet's faith in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection after death. The second stanza gives the gist of the old wisdom. Man has two extremities, the life of the individual soul and the life of the race, both of which pass through a series of death and rebirths. All this was known in old Ireland and is one of the cardinal tenets in Yeats's own philosophy. Man may die of any one of the several clauses, natural or violent, but death, in all its forms, is a brief passing of breath. The grave-diggers, despite all their toil, cannot obliterate the spirit of man. The immortality of the human soul implies the reality of death. The third stanza glorifies war with reference to the prayer of the Irish leader, John Mitchel (1815-75) who said:

"Give us war in our time, O Lord!" Yeats is referring to patriotic wars which are fought for the liberation of one's country. The man who fights madly for his country "laughs aloud his heart at ease". The fourth stanza is addressed to the painters and artists in particular and exhorts them to keep up the old ideals of painting and sculpture in order to mould the body and the soul of the nation. This stanza gives us a brief history of
European culture as seen through Yeats's somewhat limited vision. Yeats does rightly see the perfection of Phidias, who was the greatest sculptor of ancient Greece. He was responsible for the ornamentation of the Parthenon and the statue of Zeus at Olympus. Also Yeats appreciates the perfection of Quattrocento (15th century) Renaissance art in Michelangelo. Apart from his excellent work as sculptor, draughtsman and architect, Michelangelo's frescoes on the vaulted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome are the finest of their kind. Time rolled on.

When the time of the perfection of art had passed, there were still artists such as Calvert, Wilson, Blake and Claude who painted pictures which could provide rest and comfort to the pious people. It is interesting to recall here the remark of Raymond Lister on the quality of Calvert's art:

"Calvert's engravings and to a lesser degree his pictures depict a symbolic world, a place of dreamy peacefulness".

Yeats himself wrote about Blake's wood-engravings for Thornton's Virgil that: "always in his boys and girls walking or dancing on smooth grass and in golden light, as in pastoral scenes cut upon wood or copper by his disciples, Palmer and Calvert, one notices the peaceful Swedenborgian heaven".
"Palmer's phrase - refers to the remark of Palmer about the work of Blake, which shows us the drawing aside of the fleshly curtain and the glimpse which shows all the most holy, studious saints and sages". After these artists the old tradition fell into decay. In the fifth stanza, Yeats exhorts the Irish poets to learn the art of poetry correctly and fully. They should write poems about dignified themes and about people of character and integrity. They should sing the songs which are well made i.e. which have the shape and substance. They should hate the fashionable poetry (now growing up) which is awkward completely, divided, having no harmony between head and heart and corrupt. He tells them what subjects they should deal with in their poetry. He wants them to write poems about 1) the brave Irish peasants; 2) the tough country gentry who have a lot of stamina which they show in their horsemanship; 3) the monks who are genuinely holy; 4) the people who enjoy their beer and whose laughter is carefree and boisterous; and 5) the gay aristocratic lords and ladies whose character was moulded by the history of the brave deeds of the Irish nation during the previous seven hundred years. Yeats wants the poets to write poems about these classes of people, and not about the mass of shapeless individuals who are now emerging. The last section is the poet's own epitaph. We come down from the top of Ben Bulbin to the Dunriff Church at the foot of it, where the poet's great grandfather John Yeats, had been the rector 'long years ago'. A road runs by it and there is an ancient cross near

at hand. Let the dead body of W.B. Yeats, product of that soil, be laid at rest in that church yard. Let there be no marble monument, no conventional epitaph: but on his tomb of stone, yielded by the quarry near the spot, only these words, dictated by him, be inscribed:

Cast a Cold eye
On life, on death,
Horseman, pass by.

The 'horseman' in this characteristic epitaph, symbolizes associations which Irishmen in general and Yeats, the poet, in particular attached to this figure.

Then there is the image of the huge giant, Dhoya, who is heard still riding by Irish peasants who see a huge shadow rushing along the mountain.\(^1\) Above all there is the image of Sidhe, 'fierce horsemen who ride from mountain to mountain'. The poet appeals to this supernatural horsemen 'to cast a cold eye on life'; on death, because it knows both, the things natural and supernatural. "Under Ben Bulben" is a fitting conclusion to the life and work of a poet whose life-long concern was 'to hammer his thoughts into unity'. It brings full circle the poetic career of one for whom the circle was a dominant symbol. The themes and interests of his early manhood - Irish folk-lore and history, the

occult, Shelley, Blake and the English Romantic painters of the late nineteenth century - fit like tesserae into the mosaic pattern of his later 'system'. As Michel Angelo, though dead, continues to influence the living with heroic images 'On the Sistine Chapel-roof', so Yeats still speaks from 'under Ben Bulben'.