CHAPTER III

YEATS'S PLAYS

Note: Textual quotations are taken from

The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats

Macmillan London 1960
The poetic drama, over which Yeats has pondered deeply and passionately in his Poetics, is found in all its variety and excellence in his dramatic output. Here he poses and resolves concretely the problems which he has posed and resolved theoretically in his writings upon dramatic topics. In their resolution he is a total failure in comedies, partial success in tragedies and consummate success in dance-dramas—his failure and success being dependent upon the degree of fusion that he attains between the communication of his world-vision and the illumination of reality.

As has already been explained in the previous chapter, Yeats's world-vision seeks to reduce the superstructural disciplines of religion, metaphysics, philosophy and psychology to the matrix of magic. Evidently it is a polyvalent elaboration of common sense which essentially is neophobic because it is incapable of acquiring new vistas of experience and new perspectives of wisdom from history. So his world-vision remains traditional, archetypal and anthropological because it holds the products of time as paradigm of reality generated by the eternal and infinite intersection of the antinomial gyres. In its own subtle and sensitive way, it tries to reclaim the eternal return of the archaic myth because it is only in the cyclical theories of modern times (and Yeats's theory is as significant from this point of view as the biological theory of Vico and morphological theory of Spengler) that "the meaning of the archaic myth of eternal repetition realises its full implications."1

Owing to the backward dimension of time inherent in it, Yeats's world-vision fails to illuminate the contradictions immanent in life. An inner exile from contemporary Ireland, Yeats feels at home only in the super-country which is more and more of the mind and less and less of life, but is preserved only in legends, the half-mythological and half-philosophical elements of the folk-lore of the country. By life in the super-country he means family-life in the lap of the "soil", which thus generating life is

"all the matter in which the soul works, the walls of our houses, the serving up of our meals, and the chairs and tables of our rooms, and the instincts of our bodies; and by family all institutions, classes, orders, nations, that arise out of the family and are held together, not by a logical process, but by historical association, and possess a personality for whose lack men are "sheep without a shepherd when the snow shuts out the sun."

Evidently Yeats realises his essential self in that hidden Ireland for which the available evidence is an "anthropology of customs, beliefs and holy places" and more so in the seminal encounters inherent in the autochthonous "mother-centred sexual myth which Yeats appears to follow back to its source in the return to the mother who is at once

1. If I were Four and Twenty, Dublin 1940 P.13
2. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, Fontana London 1971 P.24
Due to his preoccupation with the super-country Yeats is involved in a frontal conflict with history which tends to make his world-vision a moment of eternity rather than a moment of humanity. This is evident from the fact that his world-vision does not philosophically interpret the as yet amorphous points of view of the two fundamental social blocs fighting for social, political and cultural hegemony in Ireland. He is extremely impervious to the Catholic peasantry because he feels that its ethos is no longer determined by man's relationship with nature. Instead, he thinks that by becoming hegemonic, it wants to dismember the traditional social fabric of the country. He is as much disinclined towards the Protestant gentry which seems to place man's relationships with self and society above his relationship with nature thinking "of nothing but getting on in the world."

Born and reared between these two communities forming two irreconcilable fundamental social blocks, Yeats reconciles himself with the folkloric ethos of the Catholic peasantry in the past and with those segments of it in the present which nurture the ethos of the past and are completely deracinated as far as its social and political interests are concerned. Such deracinees are the fool, the harlot, the old man, the beggar and the hunchback, etc. Embodying "certain perennial motives and visions heroic in the clarity of their definition", they are

2. W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies, New York 1953 P.102
immanent with the potential of "archetypal figures released from history." From the Protestant gentry he chooses only those aristocrats who either confront history and become heroes or are tragically resilient to it and remain visionaries. Thus, Yeats admires the deracinees from subaltern humanity, and heroes, aristocrats and visionaries from the higher strata of society. Only those chosen people constitute humanity for him because "his respect for ordinary people as constituting a particular society and living a certain life at a certain time" is extremely weak; when he looks beyond the chosen few he sees "a fictive race rather than a finite society."

His hero has intensity, solitude and defeat as the constant attributes of his being. He is, in fact, a permanent icon of these attributes and every hero, present and past, is or has been their figura. In this way Yeats's concept of the hero implies "a sinless prototype and varying degrees of approach to that prototype." The same is true of his concept of the aristocrat and the visionary. The aristocrat has non-chalance, self-possession and solicitude, the qualities which have what Alex Zwerdling has termed "Warrior-roots". Thus the attributes of the hero and the qualities of the aristocrat are not exclusive but broadly inclusive. Aristocratic society is not "closer to the realm of possibility," in the world in which the heroic ideal may be an alien.

1. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, Fontana London 1971 PP. 30, 29
3. Alex Zwerdling, Yeats and the Heroic Ideal, London 1966 PP.80,65
The third type of this triumvirate, the visionary, is exceptional for his ecstasy, transparency and vision. His acceptance brings with it "an energy so noble, so powerful, that we laugh aloud and mock, in the terror or the sweetness of our exaltation, at death and oblivion."

The aristocrat, hero and visionary, symbolise respectively, the life, action and thought of supramundane living. When the old man, the beggar, the prostitute and the hunchback correlate their articulation of mundane living to that of the supramundane living of the heroic triumvirate, the whole of ethos of Yeats is echoed by these contrapuntal articulations. From them is then audible the emotion of multitude or the spirit of anti-history which being traditional and anthropological cannot be identical with concrete, social and historical life. Emotion of multitude or the spirit of anti-history divides life into four conceptual, a-social and a-historical structures i.e. Logos, Eros, World and Thanatos. Placing his chief character in any of these structures, Yeats derives from his being the whole of the wisdom of that part of humanity of which he is a living figura. Descending lower into the experiential region of the seminal encounter, the spirit of anti-history creates myth or more particularly anti-myth because "the myth of classical antiquity arose from a sympathy or genuine relationship with reality" while anti-myth (like the myth of the romanticists, in general)

arises from the ruins of reality and to some extent as a substitute for it. His plays can, thus, be regarded as reverberating the wisdom of anti-history through the experience of anti-myth.

The fusion of wisdom derived from anti-history and experience developed through anti-myth makes Yeats a dramatic poet of what Edward Engelberg has called "the affirmative capability." His subordination of the objective world to his fictive imagination is "a clear analogue of narcissism." So it is not incumbent upon Yeats to impart plastic personality to his characters as Shakespeare, for example, has to do on the basis of negative capability. Instead, he transforms the prototypes of seminal encounter into embodiments of an aspect of his antinomial vision which they then articulate through gestures determined by the movements of dance, and words accentuated by the intonations of music.

The dance-determined gestures of the Yeatsean characters are in consonance with the cultural ethos from which their living types draw their sustenance. This cultural ethos is of the primeval countryside where the equipoise and rhythm of slow-changing nature condition even the postures and gestures of the people. With reference to women of primeval countryside, Carlo Levi has explained that they develop the postures of those "accustomed to balancing heavy weights on their heads" and their faces acquire "an expression of primitive solemnity." Similarly,


their motions become "grave but without womanly grace, like the weighty
glances cast by their curious black eyes." Indeed they do not look
"like women, but like soldiers of a strange army, or rather a fleet of
dark round boats waiting all together for the wind to inflate their
sails." To make the gestures and postures of these people dance-
determined is a short step indeed and Yeats is able to do so admirably
because his drama communicates not their demeanour but their essence.

These dance-determined gestures and postures impart "a very
strong visual basis" to Yeats's dramatic pattern which does not, however,
become geometrical or diagrammatic due to a very strong auditory
impression of the poetic language. This language is neither of the
classical painting that tends to obliterate the distinction between the
subject and the predicate, nor of the modern painting that tends to
reduce it to a conglomeration of conditional clauses and subjunctives.
Instead, it is the language of music which observes the basic distinction
between subject and predicate but between words intersperses spaces of
silence which impart incantatory solemnity to their sounds and meanings.
When these spaces of silence are not interspersed or are interspersed
haphazardly through poetic cliches, no dramatic context exists for the
incantatory solemnity to prevail and the drama becomes only a callocation
of poetic but autonomous irrelevances. Such irrelevances are to be found
in abundance in Yeats's earlier tragedies. In his later tragedies and
dance-dramas language displays a greater sense of discipline, rigour and power.

1. Carlo Levi, Christ Stopped at Eboli (translated by Frances Frenaye)
New York 1964 PP.30-31

This language is not generative. It is only suggestive tending to become symbolical along with the other ingredients of the dramatic pattern. Its symbol is, to apply Arnold Hauser's definition to it, "an over-determined image, its power lies in a multiplicity, a seeming inexhaustibility of meaning." With such a multiple and inexhaustible symbol at its centre, Yeats's play suggests polyvalent levels of meaning. As a result, a dramatic pattern centred upon one antinomial conflict gives suggestions of the other antinomial conflicts, i.e., the seminal encounter worked out between action and knowledge can also suggest the conflicts inherent between essence and existence, power and wisdom, will and imagination, life and death, personality and character, picture and gesture, and vision and reality.

The amplitude, suggested by these antinomial conflicts, lacks the plentitude of depth, as a result of which Yeats's play becomes lyrical on the one hand and the play-in-miniature on the other. Lyrical impulse reduces the concretely conflicting and contrasting relationships of plastic personalities to the varying facets of the interior personality of the writer. One character, usually the hero and spokesman of the dramatic poet, so dominates the other characters that "his confrontations of other characters seem falsified: the meetings with other personae are merely opportunities for their spiritual domination by the hero." Several of Yeats's tragedies are lyrical in this sense, but his dance-dramas are more so because in them the hero is the dramatic poet's point of view itself and the characters reduced to their anti-selves.

2. George T.Wright, The Poet in the Poem, Berkley 1960 P.7
or prototypical selves work out this point of view chiefly through the bounding and unbounding lyrics. Naturally, T.S. Eliot has called Yeats "a lyrical dramatist" and Francis Fergusson has termed Yeats's play as "overgrown type of lyric." No doubt Yeats incorporates dramatic it is movement into lyrical statis; but since/drama that is appropriated into the lyrical structure and not the other way round, Yeats is chiefly a lyrical dramatist.

Now lyrical impulse "is no longer in rapport with experience" because it best communicates wisdom of which the past is the repository; it does not equally communicate the understanding that the present bestows and the knowledge that the future forebodes. It is thus a mode for the past and not a mode for the present and the future. Thus it is an inadequate mode because there has never been a past without present and future. For this inadequacy the lyrical drama is essentially a play-in-miniature and the lyrical drama of Yeats, without a parallel in English, is distinctively so. It is also and partly because of it, the most elitist drama in English.

Indeed it is the opposite of Lorca's drama which employs all the modes of stylisation but which never becomes elitist, for Lorca's

2. Francis Fergusson, The Human Image in Dramatic Literature, New York 1957 P.90
drama does not impart absolute proportions to the life of the super-country. Taking the super-country in the historical context, this drama tends as much to the communication of his world-vision as to the illumination of reality. As Ronald Gaskell has convincingly pointed out, "The vitality of Lorca's work is not just a feeling for the natural world, for the life of the senses, or for human emotion. It includes these, and the senses give emotion the words and images it needs to find a voice."

Finding him an authentic successor of Shakespeare, Gaskell remarks, "But what makes his plays so exhilarating, what reminds us of Shakespeare, is his intuition of energy that displays itself equally through nature and in the passions of men and women. So the focal point of Lorca's drama ... affirms the moving stream of human life within the larger rhythm of generation which we call the world."

This vitality is evident in Blood Wedding which illuminates the disintegration of autochthonous life but also asserts that this disintegration cannot be what the Bible deplores because there is the mother-earth to rejuvenate life by changing the blood of the dead into a new fountain of life. To illuminate this reality and to communicate this world-vision, the playwright employs a situation that is both simple and universal. Hinging upon rivalry between two families and two men for a woman, the tragedy consummates itself within a lyrical and musical framework. In lullabies and wedding-songs, the music imparts overwhelming intensity by acquiring the context of such folk-symbols as the house, the knife, the rider, the flowers and the moon. The use of

1. Ronald Gaskell, Drama and Reality, London 1972
all these stylisations does not make the drama elitist, rather it becomes, as Francis Fergusson asserts, "an authentic modern poetic drama."

II

(i)

Generally Yeats's plays tend to reproduce the image of poetic drama explained in his critical writings, except for the comedies in which he neither poses nor resolves, from his poetic and dramatic perspective, the problems of poetic drama. The comedies can be divided into longer and miniature comedies: the former being *Where there is Nothing*, *The Unicorn from the Stars* and *The Player Queen*, and the latter *The Green Helmet*, *The Hour Glass* and *The Cat and the Moon*. Apart from their size, they are different from each other in that the longer comedies are written in prose and the miniature ones in verse. Both are partially preoccupied with the problems of poetic drama though in the longer ones this preoccupation is extremely dispersed and in the miniature ones it is relatively unified.

The longer comedies are partially poetic with respect to their themes which relate to the prophecy of destruction, the notion of the historical cycle, the apocalyptic annunciation, the primary or antithetical dispensation, the burden of universal catastrophe and the accompanying terror-in-exultation and exultation-in-terror. They are viable motifs for poetic drama but they are not developed through thoughts, actions

and events unified in the personalities of the characters. Instead, they are latent in apocalyptic symbols of the demi-urgic rough beast and the harlot. They do become nodes of spiritual triumph and super-human glory but at the same time get deracinated from human praxis.

Almost inevitably this deracination separates the poetic core from the dramatic pattern. The poetic core, embodied by an unreal animal from the fabulous bestiary — "having a certain nobility and spirituality deriving from its traditional association with the idea of chastity" — is trans-human; and the dramatic pattern, pre-determined in a world of worldlessness, is inactive, inert and trivial. Naturally this dramatic pattern becomes inverted and infolded simply because everything lofty, solemn, pious and spiritual is non-human. The human is worldly and banal, and the human characters, enclosed in the small world of anthropological living, develop no new vistas of experience. Even those characters, who as fools, beggars and harlots, etc., articulate apocalyptic annunciation, remain essentially antithetical to such as Leda, The Virgin, Oedipus, Christ, etc., which are their poetic counterparts in the tragedies and the dance-dramas.

Because of this inversion and infoldedness, the longer comedies of Yeats fail to communicate the wisdom of anti-history through the experience of anti-myth in a lyrical and symbolical way. They suffer from a disjunction of the type such as is there in Where there is Nothing which is an obvious attempt to work out the implications of a Blakean-Nietzschean world-view in the context of an Ibsenite social

The world-view is obviously apocalyptic but all its supernatural glory is bedimmed because it has to manifest itself to a gathering of characters burdened with worldly motivations. The events have nothing of the inside, and the outside unravels itself only in a haphazard way. Evidently, they degenerate into disunited incidents standing out as the phantastic elements of the plot-structure. This disunity is not at all attenuated by Paul Rutledge, the crazed country-gentleman, turned tinker, then monk. However, neither sphinx nor monk, he is only pathetic whether leading his gang of folksy tinkers or credulous friars. He becomes still more pathetic by quoting or paraphrasing Blake in irrelevant contexts because this eccentricity deprives his speech even of that naturalness which words being synchronic with reality are liable to impart it. So this "yoking of antiquities, A Marriage of Heaven and Hell" as in Blake's terminology he claims it to be, ends up only as "a grotesque coupling unsatisfactory to both modes, visionary romance and folk-farce." Its saving grace lies in two or three epiphanies which apart from being incommensurate, are inherently incapable of salvaging the play from pompous, unpoetic, melodramatic and non-dramatic elements.

The Unicorn from the Stars is an adaptation from Where there is Nothing. It observes a loose and chaotic unilinear scheme rather than a wheel-like pattern. In it the visionary surrogate of Paul

1. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972 (Paper-back) P.144
2. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, New York 1961 P.296
3. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972 (Paper-back) P.146
Ruttledge is Martin Heene whose visions induce him to take the lead when a crowd of tramps set fire to the land. In the end he is killed by mistake during a struggle with the constables. As Whitaker has hinted, Martin Heene's frenzy to transform the world is Nietzschean in essence because it "projects upon a temporal landscape that apocalyptic moment" in which the human soul wants to realise the change transmitted to it by the supernatural agency. The supernatural agency, here is, the unicorn which, according to Melchiori,

"is chastity itself. Copulation and begetting are its opposite, its Mask. Now the consummation by the Unicorn of an act of lust would mean reaching its own opposite, its Mask, and this is outside the range of natural possibilities, it is miracle ... only miracle can produce the end of an era and the advent of a new Dispensation."

Owing to its miraculous nature, the essence of this new Dispensation remains beyond the human potentialities of the characters. More so because all the characters are essentially of the World; even Martin Heene, though momentarily he has a vision of the intellectual Eros.

As a poetic form of drama, this play is, no doubt, extremely inadequate even though as a theatrical piece it is much better than

Where there is Nothing. As Peter Ure has observed, the reduction of the visionary "from country gentleman to tradesman" imparts to the dramatic pattern "further unities of setting and society." Developed characterisation of Martin's two uncles, Father John and Thomas Hearne, helps the audience "to believe in and sympathise with Martin."

Poetically also it ranks above the previous play because of its compact Biblical imagery. The symbolic horsemen of the Apocalypse and the wine press of the wrath of God are elaborately developed symbols. Along with the symbol of the Unicorns who with "virginal strength, a rushing lasting, tireless strenth" (P.338) shouting "destroy, destroy — destroy", (P.346) completely overwhelm Martin and others with revelation and exultation. Since they configure the trans-human rather than the human sphere, they generate a scheme which is poetically inadequate though dramatically ingenious.

This correlation of poetic inadequacy and dramatic ingenuity is carried further in The Player Queen which Yeats had begun as a tragedy. Lacking simplicity and life, however, it would not mould itself in the tragic form. So Yeats decided to turn it into a farce. In his Poetics, farce, instead of being the opposite of tragedy, is its concomitant and the farcical mode is a fit vehicle for showing liberation from passion as the tragic mode is meant to show preoccupation with it. The peculiar mode of The Player Queen is "apocalyptic farce" as Harold Bloom has discerned it, and the play becomes a farcical testament to Yeats's

1. Peter Ure, Yeats the Playwright, London 1963
2. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972
esoteric preoccupations, i.e., the finding of the Mask or the Anti-self in relation to the apocalyptic end of an era and the advent of a new dispensation.

Corresponding to this thematic complexity is the intricate dramatic scheme of the play in which are woven two stories, one being centred upon Septimus, the drunken poet, and the other on his wife Decima, the player queen. According to Peter Ure the two stories are "carefully interwoven" 1 while Helen Vendler calls the whole scheme "private, chaotic, allegorical" — with allegory "only sporadically remembered", and the issues being "rarely clear." These two diverse opinions are not contradictory, they supplement each other, i.e., the playwright ingeniously tries to make the plot one integral whole which, instead, ends up as a chaotic schemata. The reason for this failure lies, as in Where there is Nothing and Unicorn from Stars, in that the poetic core, because of its trans-human essence, does not permeate the personal and inter-personal relationships of the characters. The characters are not united, they are only tied to one another and the changes occurring to them are only praeternaturally assumed by them, they are not naturally worked out through relations and inter-relations.

The same is true of what happens within the characters themselves. For example, Septimus is a poet with Decima as the Muse but a new dispensation being imminent, he becomes a prophet with the Unicorn as his Daimon. This is a change in which his Self becomes

1. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1960 P.136
Anti-self and he becomes its mouth-piece as farcically as he was a poet previously. This change does show dramatic ingenuity but nowhere does it reflect poetic inexorability. Similarly, Decima, from wife and actress, becomes an inverted surrogate of Leda and Virgin Mary; and the Beggar, originally an absolute deracinee, becomes a parodic Evangelist. These transformations, though ingenious, have no urgency about them, not even in those places where the characters tend to melt into each other and into their allegorical types. For example, Septimus and the Beggar are both poets but factors, that could unite them into a singular but expanded identity and disunite them into two dissimilar beings, are not forthcoming from the play. Similarly, Decima is both the Muse and the Oracle, the Unicorn is no less so in both the spheres, but what distinctions do they evince as Muse and what universalises and particularises their Oracular annunciations are nowhere evident in the enamelled rhetoric of the play. All these factors increase the poetic dramatic inadequacy of the play, redeemed somewhat by songs and epiphanic utterances which, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, are too feeble to project the aura of poetic drama.

(ii)

This poetic-dramatic inadequacy mars also the miniature comedies in which poetic inexorability reduces dramatic ingenuity. So poetic inexorability becomes poetic license or a cumulation of poetic cliches borrowed as symbols, images and expressions from the Irish folklore, which is more amenable to descriptive and narrative than to dramatic pattern. They could be appropriated to the dramatic pattern only by the
supersession of the descriptive and narrative modes which Yeats fails to attain in them.

His failure is most evident in The Green Helmet, the earliest of these comedies. Yeats has justly called it "a Heroic Farce" because all its heroic characters reveal their farcical essence. Bent upon protecting the house from the supernatural shape-changers, Laegaire and Conall are outwardly ferocious like the ocean near which they live. Inwardly they are mortally afraid of "the red-headed, red-bearded man" (P.231) who two years earlier let them cut off his head on the condition that he would later cut off their heads in return. They are farcical because they are contradictory, Cuchulain and the Red Man being so in equal measure for the recklessness which makes them oscillate between life and death. Their wives, servants, stable-boys and scullions add an element of absurdity to their contradictory and reckless farcicality because they fight and quarrel amongst themselves like automatons.

As a result of this confusion, the play's excess of action makes it heterogeneous and discordant. It could be made homogeneous and concordant by introducing this action in a controlled measure, and that would have been possible by letting the heroes define themselves and their actions with knowledge and awareness in the context of the Red Man's motive which he reveals as under:

I have not come for your hurt, I'm the Rector of this land,
And with my spitting cat-heads, my frenzied moon-bred band,
Age after age I sift it, and choose for its championship
The man who hits my fancy. (P.243)
The motive of the Red Man remains as mysterious as that of the apocalyptic agent in the longer comedy. Naturally, the play ends up as a cumulation of heterogeneous actions, "a wild, high-spirited and in-spots-eerie piece" though "the characters are much clearer than is usual in farce, and the laughing tone is maintained despite jogging metre and whatever difficulties may be implicit in setting fairy-tale material to the uses of heroic farce."

Parallel to this cumulation of heterogeneous actions is the rhetorical language that abounds in alliteration, flamboyance and folkloric symbolisation. Through the use of such symbols as the sea, the hut, the goblets of wine, the wool-white waves, the daggers and the rocks, the language creates an exotic and fabulous atmosphere in which the words are self-sufficient autonomous units with no tension between their etymological roots and metaphorical meanings. With the exception of Emer's importunity, "Live and be faithless still" (P.242), there is scarcely a line that touches the interior of the dramatic experience. Thus the play ends up as an exotic piece having superabundance only of words.

In The Hour Glass Yeats shows "substantial improvement" and "it has at least the possibility of drama." By reflecting upon a universal conflict between Faith and Reason, its theme invokes the outside as well as the inside of dramatic experience. The Wise Man has all his life preached that pragmatic ratiocination and empirical sensations are

1. George Brandon Saul, 'Yeats's Dramatic Accomplishment' in W.B.Yeats: Centenary Essays, Ibadan 1965 P.146
2. Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice, Princeton 1959 P.50
the only modes to ultimate truth:

There's nothing but what men can see when
they are awake. Nothing, Nothing. (P.306)

Since he is able to reinforce his point of view with an
impressive collection of scholastic quotations, the people are converted
to his point of view. Only Teigue, the Fool, has kept his own faith
but a fool cannot speak anything for the Wise Man. When his sense of
confession and repentance turns him from agnosticism to theism, humbly
and stoically he says:

— May God's Will prevail on the instant,
Although His Will be my eternal pain.
I have no question:
It is enough, I know what fixed the station
Of star and cloud.
And knowing all, I cry
That Whatso God has willed
On the instant be fulfilled
Though that may be my damnation. (P.323)

After this exclamation, the Wise Man collapses and dies, but
as recompense for his penitence, his soul is admitted to the Garden of
Paradise.

The Wise Man's change is logical and rational but does not
render any vision of the "deep of the mind", that Yeats later renders
in his dance-dramas. This change does not develop from within the Wise

1. W.B. Yeats, Introduction to Certain Noble Plays of Japan, Cuala
Press, London 1916 P.5
Man but is imposed upon him from without by the Angel who is apocalyptic like the supernatural agencies in the longer comedies. All the same, the change is much more convincing here because the Angel immediately makes the Wise Man aware of his imminent death:

That you will die when
last grain of sand
Has fallen through this glass. (P. 308)

This awareness so overwhelms the Wise Man that his logical and rational language becomes poetic and rhetorical, more rhetorical than poetic because the impending catastrophe has come so unexpectedly. To articulate his pain and dread, he resorts to expansive and exalting images of the martyrs, the angels, the saints, translunary beings, the Babylonian moon, the lake of spaces and the wood of Nothing, etc. Not involved in the crisis, the other characters employ only limiting and circumscribing images referring to such objects of the mundane world as the crows, the chickens, the bacon, the nuts, the drinks and the pennies.

The division of imagery into mundane and supramundane spheres is paralleled by the division of language into the same spheres. Characters forwarding rational explanation of things, talk in prose, but, when articulating feelings of faith, they almost impulsively use verse as the medium. The following conversation between the Wise Man and his wife brings out the ingenuity of Yeats in interlocking characters using both verse and prose:

Wiseman: But sometimes when the children are asleep

And I am in the school, do you not think
About the martyrs and the saints and the angels,
And all the things that you believed in once?

Wife: I think about nothing. Sometimes I wonder if the linen is bleaching white, or I go out to see if the crows are picking up the chickens' food. (P.317)

The contrast between the supramundane and the mundane spheres gives to the play the aura of a morality-play, free from the platitudinous aroma of the characters of a morality-play of the medieval era. With the exception of the Wise Man, its characters are essentially half-anonymous rendering the play lack the excellence of a true poetic play as the morality plays lacked the magnificence of the great Elizabethan drama.

The 'substantial improvement' that Yeats shows in The Hour Glass is, more or less, negated in The Cat and the Moon in which he is concerned with the exposition of the changing dispensation of history and the occurrence of the apocalyptic moment. Yeats has worked out this theme in a naturalistic manner in the longer comedies. Here the theme is developed in a symbolical way for which reason it ends up as a mystery-play adapted from the Noh play of Japan. Evidently, the characters are symbolical, and as Yeats himself has observed, the Blind Man is "the body" and the Lame Man is "the soul." There is also repeated mention of Minmalushe, the cat whose eyes change like the changing moon and who unquestionably symbolises man in search of his opposite.

With the Lame Beggar riding on the Blind Beggar's shoulder,

1. W.B. Yeats, Explorations, London 1962 P.402
there is represented the body with the soul within it. In this combination they trudge to the holy well of St. Colman. The moment of apocalyptic annunciation is at hand because, as the Song of the First Musician signifies,

The cat went here and there
And the moon spun like a top,
And the nearest kin of the moon,
The creeping cat looked up.
Black Minmaloushe stared at the moon
For wonder and wail as he would,
The pure cold light in the sky
Troubled his animal blood. (p.461)

As they journey, they dispute about their gluttony, knavishness and foolhardiness. Even when blessedness is offered to them, they do not accept it readily. The Blind Beggar refuses to be kin to blessed saints and martyrs and the Lame Beggar accepts the relationship with hesitation and reluctance.

Their composite gestures and postures suggest the difficulty that the human being encounters in adopting blessedness. However this suggestion is so vague that, according to Yeats's own confession, "no audience could discover its dark, mythical secrets." The linking of the symbols with the theme is so arbitrary that no interpretation can be made of it unless Yeats's own suggestion is kept in mind, i.e., "the spectator should come away thinking the meaning as much his own manufacture as that of the blindman and the lameman had seemed mine."

1. W.B. Yeats, Explorations, London 1962 PP.400, 403
Since only Yeats himself could have the condescension that he recommends to others, the play seems to be nothing more than "merely a pretentious triviality." |

It remains pretentiously trivial though dance and music are schematically integrated into it. The complex scheme of the play gives evidence of its formal ingenuity demonstrating that ingenuity can be one of the factors of poetic drama, but not its essence. Naturally the song, its structural use of opening and closing the play, with a middle section inserted in the dialogue, has only outward relevance though for Ronald Peacock there is "deeper relevance" in this arrangement.

III

(i)

In his tragedies Yeats shows a firmer grasp of the problems of poetic drama though he does not resolve them as consummately as he does in his dance-dramas. The poetic essence of these tragedies does not lie in apocalyptic symbols which the characters may attain to in a trans-human way by transporting themselves outside the spatio-temporal range of human life. Instead its relevance is valid within the range of human life, identical with the pattern which the characters can live through their passion and articulate through their gaiety.

1. George Brandon Saul 'Yeats's Dramatic Accomplishment' P.139
   W.B. Yeats:Centenary Essays, Ibadan 1965
Naturally the poetic pattern is like an intricate growth upon the dramatic pattern. Motivated by passion, it has a backward dimension in time which grows as counterpoint to the dramatic pattern. So the dramatic pattern is only a point of departure for the poetic pattern which assumes poetic irrelevance brought into existence by the lyrical impulse. The efflorescence of the lyrical impulse as a counterpoint to dramatic contingency, does not allow time to pervade the Yeatsean tragedy as continuum and growth. Instead vertical, historical and human time is so appropriated by the horizontal, natural and non-human time that it becomes a simultaneity apotheosised by the tragic character in opposition to the natural flow of chronological time. Evidently Yeats's tragedy is extremely spatial and is somewhat similar to Greek tragedy and altogether dissimilar to the Shakespearean drama because in the former the vertical time is absorbed by the horizontal time but in the latter both arrive at a point of intersection with neither annihilating the other.

On account of its overwhelming spatiality, events in Yeats's tragedy are connected together by spatial extension. The tragedy has to start immediately before its end, that is, its beginning is immanent in its end. So it observes the unities of time, place and action, using action to the minimal extent, as ritual for configuring the generosity, courtesy, courage, passion and integrity of its heroic and aristocratic protagonists.

Correlative with this ritual enactment is Yeats's use of the myth which epitomises the essential world of the poetic pattern. Living
in surroundings determined by the dramatic pattern, the mythical heroes experience a hiatus between their eternal essence and historical existence. All the time they experience "ens perfectissimum also being ens realissimum, i.e., the more perfect a being is, the more closely it corresponds to its idea, the more it exists." In their effort to identify their existence with their essence, they live the life of the poetic pattern, where they consummate themselves in their tragic end. At the same time, they experience gaiety that transfigures "all that dread" that they may have about their destiny.

In these tragedies Yeats makes mythomaniac use of myth that is qualitatively different from the mythopoeic use that he makes in his dance-dramas. As T.S. Eliot seems to infer, the mythomaniac method is "external" in which the dramatic poet delineates "legendary heroes and heroines" but treats them "as creatures of a different world". As against it, the mythopoeic method is "internal" in which the same men and women are treated "as universal men and women", and in which the myth becomes "a vehicle for a situation of universal meaning." Contrary to both is the immanent/historical method in which the myth vanishes into history and history acquires the universality of myth.

Yeats reduces history to myth, partially in his tragedy and fully, in his dance-drama. Because of this partial reduction, the Yeats's tragedy is antinomial, its two antinomies being metaphorically

its concrete and symbolical aspects. The concrete aspect has as an analogue the Shakespearan pattern which, being typological and analogical, is always pervaded with dynamism: event leading to knowledge and knowledge leading to a new event. The symbolical aspect has analogues in the dramatic pattern of Maeterlinck and Mallarme which, being fixed in space, is antithetical to the concrete aspect. All the same, it creates an illusion of mobility when through the subtlety of medium and the technique of inference, the symbolic levels work out their meaning towards an apocalyptic ending. However its characters are liable to become what Yeats finds Maeterlincks' characters to be, i.e. "faint souls, naked and pathetic shadows already half-vapour and sighing to one another upon the border of the last abyss." To ward off this vaporisation it is essential to interfuse the concrete aspect with the symbolical aspect, thereby bringing into contrapuntal fusion the dramatic and the lyrical patterns. As a result Yeats's tragedy becomes one in which the poetical pattern tends to apotheosise the dramatic pattern towards an apocalyptic end. However, it resists the apotheosis and out of this resistance is born its tragic sense.

The contrapuntalism that prevails between the poetical and the dramatic patterns divides the characters of the Yeatsian tragedy into protagonists and antagonists who correspond respectively with the poetical and the dramatic pattern. The protagonists are anthropological beings swayed by imagination and blood but keeping aloof from time and history. They are subjective and passionate and pursue all the time their Daimon

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embodied in women of their dispensation. They do not glance at the world but only gaze inward; with their gaze "purely internal and secret", turned on "the antithetical nature and the correspondingly challenged antinomies." Their passion and inwardness lead them to a catastrophic end because the world does not remain of their dispensation but becomes rational and objective on account of the gyral change continuously occurring in the universe. In this inimical world, however, they do not become petrified like the characters of Kafka. They remain steadfast to their authentic selves, no matter that their authenticity and steadfastness transfigure them on the one hand and cause their death on the other.

These protagonists become impassioned and universal provided they do not merely embody the poetic self of the dramatic poet. For them to become plastic gestures, they must embody the mythical ethos of Irish culture. The same is true of their female counterparts over whom lurks continuously the personality of Maud Gonne but who as women of Phase Sixteenth are much more than the images of this or that part of her personality. They also become plastic gestures only when they give bodily manifestation to the folkloric passionateness of femininity which envisions woman as beautiful and erotic with beauty and eros

1. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, Fontana London 1971

Yeats finds the most artistic representation of the gaze in the ancient statues of Greece, India and China. As he remarks (A Vision, P.277), "Vague Grecian eyes gazing at nothing, Byzantine eyes drilled of ivory gazing upon a vision, and those eyelids of China and of India, those veiled or half-veiled eyes weary of world and of vision alike."
indistinguishably immanent in her body. Characterising them as "some beautiful women", Yeats describes them as under:

Here too are beautiful women, whose bodies have taken upon themselves the image of the True Mask, and in these there is a radiant intensity ... They walk like queens, and seem to carry upon their backs a quiver of arrows, but they are gentle only to those whom they have chosen or subdued ... Boundless in generosity, and in illusion, they will give themselves to a beggar because he resembles a religious picture.1

Their passionate femininity guarantees to them the sombre gravity of women living in the primitive countryside. Quite appropriately they become the Daimons of the male protagonists in whose passionate selves also lurks the ethos of this life. By becoming Daimonic, these women help bring out the best that is within the protagonists and help cause the worst that can happen to them. Contrasted to them are the lovely and devoted women who as wives and beloveds sacrifice their all for the protagonists. In spite of their devotion, they fail to hold the protagonists to themselves whose imagination dwells the most on women lost than on women won. So sunk "in a great labyrinth out of pride" they, oblivious of them, remain lost in their own reverie. Male counterparts of these women won are the male antagonists who, instead

1. W.B. Yeats, A Vision (Re-issue), New York 1961 P.139
of gazing within, glance at the world. This glance is outward because it denotes an objective mind which Yeats derisively calls "the administrative mind." Possessing objective minds, the antagonists are ratiocinative and worldly-wise. Being men of primary dispensation, they succeed in the mundane affairs of the world but forego the gaiety that the protagonists discover in the supramundane world. In tune with the gyral change, they become the mode through which the praeternatural antagonist causes the tragic end of the protagonists.

On their part, the protagonists are fully aware of the primacy of the latent but non-human antagonists over the manifest but human antagonists. So the colloquy through which they explicate their tragic destiny, is firstly a solitary dialogue addressed to the praeternatural antagonists and only secondly a conversation carried on with the natural antagonists. Usually their explication observes the norm of ideal hegemony because the protagonists are invariably heroes or aristocrats but, at the same time, their explanation is supplemented by explication observing the norm of subaltern humanity. The characters symbolising subaltern humanity are the musicians, the blind men and the beggar men. Their rhapsodic utterances have choric overtones because they are auditory, passive and descriptive rather than hortatory, decisive and active.


Yeats seems to have got the idea of the glance from the Roman statues. As he himself has written, (A Vision, P.276) "Roman was the first to drill a round hole to represent the pupil, and because, as I think, of a preoccupation with the glance ......."
All the same they do not form a chorus in the Greek sense of the word because chorus presupposes the wholeness of communal living which wholeness is imparted to Greek drama by the autochthonous life of those times. The life that the Yeatsean tragedy illuminates, is dichotomous from which essential wholeness has vanished but which yet nourishes illusory wholeness. In a society whose matrix is illusory wholeness, the point of view of subaltern humanity is advanced by blind men and beggar men because they are utterly deprived and are closest to unaccommodated humanity. The musicians can fully articulate this deprivation because music is capable of imparting eternal proportions to particular situations. It changes the linear and denotative nature of particularity into the immediate and simultaneous nature of eternity. Thus the blind men, beggar men and musicians are nearest to a chorus in Yeats's tragedy though they do not form a chorus in the Greek sense of the word, which implies "the presence of community —- the existence of God, the end of loneliness and a movement beyond tragedy." The rhapsodic utterances of the blind men, the beggar men and the musicians fulfil none of these implications though they are responsive to all of them.

(ii)

The Countess Cathleen is Yeats's first play in the tragic genre. It dramatises a story from Irish folklore, a loose narrative with an apocalyptic dramatic ending. As available in its cumulative form, it tries to transfigure the idyllic life of the Irish supercountry

in which according to Yeats,

"Three types of men have made all beautiful things. Aristocracies have made beautiful manners, because their place in life puts them above the fear of life, and the countrymen have made beautiful stories and beliefs because they have nothing to lose and so do not fear, and the artists have made all the rest because Providence has filled them with recklessness."

This transfiguration is achieved in the story in a naive and heterogeneous way. Conceived as an attempt to mingle personal thought and feeling with the belief and custom of Christian Ireland, it acquires a wheel-within-wheel form essentially in accord with his world-vision. So it is a tale of ancient Ireland revolving round an aristocratic house, "an old grey castle" (P.6) of the Countess in which flourish all the personal, social, cultural, artistic and spiritual virtues of the aristocratic elan. "Set among impassable walls" (P.6) this house is bountiful and secure in good times but in evil times it is subject to intrusion and theft. Within lives the beautiful, cultured and generous Countess who in her days of prosperity, is absorbed in the cultural ethos of the land due to which

"Sorrows that she's but read of in a book
Weigh on her mind as if they had been her own."(P.8)

In the days of adversity, however, "she has no joy or sorrow of her own. Fity-crazed for the people," she becomes "saint with the sapphire eyes" (P.43). She is always accompanied by Oona and Aleel. Oona, constant

1. W.B. Yeats, Essays, Dublin 1937
in her loyalty, expresses people's admiration for her aristocratic elan and Aleel, wrapped in dreams of her, sings songs of her glory.

Beyond this house is the forest inhabited by the common-people of the land. It is verdurous so long as life goes on in ancient rhythm but changes into a wilderness when disaster prevails. Similarly, the common-people inhabiting are humble and honest in natural circumstances but become otherwise in unnatural circumstances.

This wheel-within-wheel type of life is created by God as a sculptor would create a figure from clay. To ensure its survival, God has assigned Angels to guard it from above. However, danger comes from around appearing in the form of Merchants who can, chameleon-like, assume forms of bird or beast. They lure people away from their self-contented living and bring them damnation by procuring their souls at the orders of "The Master of Merchants" (P.12).

The Merchants epitomise the City in the human form. Thus the Evil is urban but how is it so is not worked out with subtlety and sensitiveness. Here Yeats resorts to simplification divested of intensity. He resorts to a similar simplification when he interfuses the pagan with the Christian view of life. As a result of these facile simplifications, the playwright fails to identify philosophy with history. So he drives the play to collapse "under a precariously balanced superstructure added to the originally well-planned carefully and laboriously constructed work."

The play could have been saved from failure if its problems had been worked out with full awareness, and all the implications of its wheel-within-wheel construction had been exhausted by confining dramatic action to the House, by showing the poverty and desperation of the people indirectly through the eyes of the Countess and by making her sell her soul with a complex of feelings and thoughts not reducible to "lavish outbursts of generosity" or ... "a singular lack of hesitation." Yeats might have done better if the dramatic impulse had not been intermingled with the impulse to glorify Maud Gonne, because as recorded by A.N. Jaffares he told her that

"he had come to understand the tale of a woman selling her soul to buy bread for her people as a symbol of all the souls who lose their peace or fineness or any beauty of the spirit in political service but chiefly of her soul that seemed to him so incapable of rest."

This impulse could have succeeded if Yeats had concentrated wholly upon the plot-action aspect of the story. But he has done so half-heartedly in the same way in which he has treated its cyclical aspect.


The same feeling is vouchsafed by him when years afterwards he reflects upon this play in 'Circus Animal's Desertion' (The Collected Poems, PP.629-630)

"And then a counter-truth filled out its play
The Countess Cathleen was the name I gave it;
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away
But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it."
This half-hearted treatment of the two aspects has evoked a composite structure marked by two movements. The first movement is of the peasants who, when famine-stricken, damn themselves by selling their souls to the Merchants, and the second of the Countess who also sells her soul but gets transfigured in the process.

Separately, both movements give evidence of artistic ingenuity but in the absence of mutual mediation they fail to attain an artistic fusion. For example, the first scene is markedly rhythmical: Shemu and Teigue are duped by the sly remarks of the Merchants, they turn against Mary who refuses to be taken in, and their willingness and her refusal are contrapuntally related to each other. In the second scene, the plot develops steadily through the Merchants' campaign and Kathleen's counter-measures. In the fifth scene the plot approaches catastrophe through soul-selling by the middle-aged Man and an unfaithful Woman. The catastrophe is recognised from the Old Woman's scream because "that name is like a fire to all damned souls" (P.42). So far as the naturalistic characterisation of these subaltern characters goes, Yeats has done it aptly. These subaltern people have little ability to cope with more than their ordinary interests. No wonder, they are more like and less unlike one another. Their likeness lies in that they speak language that is very near the dialect form and their speech is textured with folkloric imagery, in part natural and in part supernatural. Their unlikeness is brought out through their details of speech, manner, attitude and personal history. In this respect Yeats treats these characters very much like Shakespeare whom he intuitively seems to adopt here as a model.
The second movement comprises lyrical passages whose status is substitution rather than preparation for action. To express feelings of sorrow, longing and complaint, language employed in them is lyrical, meditative and dreamy. It becomes derivative sometimes with "the shadow of the Jacobean age" lurking over it as over "most nineteenth-century poetic drama ... overcast with the Celtic Pre-Raphaelitism of the 1890's." In accord with this language is imagery derived from scriptural, mythological and legendary sources. Generated through fragile and vaporous words, these images are unlike his masterful images though, as the following extract shows, through them also Yeats, sometimes, writes poetry of awareness:

"Tell them who walk upon the floor of peace
That I would die and go to her I love:
The years like great black oxen tread the world
And God, the herdsman, goads them on behind,
And I am beaten by their passing feet." (P.50)

However, when Yeats is able to write poetry such poetry tends to become independent of the dramatic context. As Dr. Rajan has perceptively remarked about this extract, "There is of course an intended contrast between the trodden field of the world and 'the floor of peace' on which Cathleen now walks, between transfiguration and mortality; but the other undertones are not drawn or meant to be drawn into the dramatic pattern."

As a result such passages as these are effective only in

2. Balachandra Rajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965
their own right.

In 1899, Yeats tried to gloss over the composite nature of the play by claiming it to be purely allegorical. "The two demons, he wrote, "are the world, and the gold is simply the pride of the eye, and the peasants we have in our hearts, and the Countess Cathleen is simply a soul or human spirit which perpetually makes the sacrifice she made, which perpetually gives itself into captivity for the service of all good causes, and in the end wins peace, because every high motive is in the substance peace." This is a very facile generalisation and the play as it is does not at all bear it out. In allegory tension is continuously maintained between the latent and the manifest patterns though the manifest pattern is only a modus operandi for the emergence of the latent pattern. But The Countess Kathleen works through "cumulative succession of episodes" which render it non-allegorical. Its last incident, which allegorically would have been really apocalyptic, is utterly ineffectual and inorganic. As T.R. Henn has observed, "And the famous ending, the reception of the Countess's soul at the hands of Virgin Mary has neither the elegiac quality of the Marlovian ending, nor the registered fortitude of the Stoic. It is not clear why it should be ineffectual: perhaps it was added as an inorganic conclusion in deference to its audience."

2. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963 P.29
No doubt T.R. Henn exaggerates the fault of the play but there is truth in what he says. In his critical moments Yeats has been deeply aware of this and other faults in the play. In one such moment he has confessed that in its differing versions it "was not, nor is it now, more than a piece of tapestry." This judgement is not without its element of harshness; all the same it is a fact that the play is tapestry-like, especially in its poetic moments.

(iii)

In his next two plays, The Land of Heart's Desire and Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Yeats avoids this tapestry-like pattern by centring on a single episode rather than upon a cumulative succession of episodes. He reduces his poetic-dramatic impulse to its simple denomination as in The Land of Heart's Desire where the super-country is subjected to a study-in-contrast between the world of Sidhe and the world of Christianity. The world of Sidhe is animated by love, beauty, youth, immortality and symbolised by "day, life, knowledge, goodness." It is a supramundane world inhabited by praeternatural beings. The world of Christianity is in all respects antinomial to it. As world of loneliness, suffering, anguish and pain, it is represented by "death, night, ignorance, evil." As the mundane world of day-to-day living, inhabited by old men and women haunted always by the fearful

1. W.B. Yeats, Dramatis Personae, London 1936 P.35
2. H.D'Abrois de Jubainville, The Irish Mythological Cycle, Dublin 1903 P.79
3. Lady Wilde, Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland, Boston 1888 P.256
implications of the Cross. This is the popular level of this study-in-contrast represented by the collective commonsense of the people. On philosophical, psychological and ontological levels, the world of Sidhe is governed by myth, instinct, pleasure-principle and space and that of Christianity by history, super-ego, the reality-principle and time. Being "the locus of conscience", super-ego "not merely represents what is socially tabooed as being intrinsically evil but also irrationally combines the ancient dread of physical annihilation with the much later fear of being expelled from the social community which has come to encircle us in the place of nature."

Though it has the philosophical, psychological and ontological levels latent in it, Yeats's study-in-contrast does not work them out through poetic-dramatic elaboration. It flourishes only at the popular level. So he works it in one episode by juxtaposing characters with opposing attitudes. The characters belong to one family with Mary, the daughter-in-law, keenly responsive to "the Land of Faery" (P.55). For transportation to the land where "the lonely of heart is withered away". (P.63), she is prepared to forego anything, household, security and love of her husband. The other characters are however opposed to her inclinations: Bridget, her mother-in-law, criticises her relentlessly; Maureen, her father-in-law, forbids her solicitously; Shawn, her husband, forwards his love as being enough to offset the turbidness of the world; and Father Hart, the priest, upholds the Cross as an antidote against "the maddening freedom and bewildering light"(P.62)

1. T.W. Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology', Socialist Digest October 1968 P.34
of "the spirits of evil" (P.72). Mary is not however to be withheld in this world by reprimands, remonstrances, and sermons. Under the overwhelming impact of the wish to "ride ... upon the wind" and "dance upon the mountain like a flame" (P.61), she breathes her last and her soul is carried away to the "Land of Heart's Desire" (P.69) by the wind that "blows out of the gates of the day." (P.72). As Harold Bloom has pointed out this wind resembles "one of Blake's destructive but appealing winds of Beulah, passively inviting and yet strong enough to uproot rocks and trees." He has further asserted that "this wind's promise relates it also to Shelley's equivocal West Wind, destroyer and preserver - a promise of fulfilment but also of death."

These characters go on declaiming to the end what they uphold in the beginning. Instead of fusing spatial elaboration with temporal variation, their assertions reflect the former. As a result "heterogenous knowledge and irrelevant analysis" accrue to the texture of the play which purposely prevent it from becoming "mysterious and inscrutable." Burdened thus with "womanish introspection," the play is no better than a composition of Chopin where "mere ornament is integrated to essential theme and surgery is mutilation." All this conforms with the language of the play which, being undifferentiated, is aphoristic rather than realistic. It is expressly intended for

1. Harold Bloom, Yeats (paper-back), New York 1972 PP.119-120
2. W.B. Yeats, Essays, Dublin 1937 P.248
3. W.B. Yeats, Letter to A.E. (Quoted in Dublin Magazine July 1939)
4. George Brandon Saul, 'Yeats's Dramatic Accomplishment'

W.B. Yeats: Centenary Essays, Ibadan 1965 P.142
lyrical quotation and not for dramatic introjection. No wonder the characters controverting one another's point of view, articulate only their own and instead of criss-crossing into one another's, their words only coincide in the adorned texture of the play.

These characteristics of the language are shared by the imagery of the play which, drawn directly from the folklore, is free from the literary, esoteric and antiquarian provenance of magic. The two basic sources of this imagery are dance and light which pertain to Logos, the Land of Heart's Desire away from "Fate and Time and Change" (P.59). Evidently it is resplendent and is connected with life by what Northrop Frye has termed the "conception of harmony." Light is the source of resplendence as dance is of harmony. Contrapuntal to this imagery is another, the one drawn from household life and the Cross, but it is entirely subsidiary and does not set a design of equal subtlety and intricacy. As a result the whole imagic design of the play is of "hollow images" from the "country of shadows" meant for decoration and introspection rather than for assertion and communication. In spite of all the ingredients of poetic drama, the play fails to become one because, in the words of Yeats himself, their net achievement is nothing more than "exaggeration of sentiment and sentimental beauty — sentiment and sentimental sadness."

Though dramatising a single episode, like *The Land of Heart's Desire*, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* is to a large extent free from its statis. The characters are much more dynamic, because of the perpetual struggle between ideal causes and private hopes and dreams. Instead of an inner crisis of the Irish super-country, the play has thus an outer crisis as its matrix. The outer crisis is the subjugation of Ireland by the British. Obviously, it is an instantly political and highly immediate issue which the playwright tries to explicate through a folkloric story, the skeletal outline of which had come to him in a dream — "One night I had a dream almost as distinct as vision, of a cottage where was well-being and talk of marriage and into the midst of that cottage there came an old woman in a long cloak. She was Ireland herself, that Cathleen Ni Houlihan — turned my dream in the little Cathleen Ni Houlihan." Owing to this folkloric inception, the play has the simplicity of theme and design. Old Cathleen Ni Houlihan visits a cottage where Michael Cillane, a handsome young man, is busy preparing to get married with Delia Cahel, a beautiful maiden. The match is regarded as propitious by the priest as well as the parents of the bridegroom. Before the marriage takes place, Cathleen Ni Houlihan leads Peter away as would a princess-in-distress, because the French are landing at Killala. In the process the old woman is metamorphosed into a beautiful young woman. The denouement comes through the shock of a new perspective that changes entirely the previous view of things.

The design of the play unfolds itself gradually but rhythmically. In the beginning Cathleen Ni Houlihan is an actual living woman, Widow Casey, distressed because her fields have been usurped. Only towards the end is her symbolical significance unravelled and she is revealed to be Ireland herself with "too many strangers in the house" (P.81), her land has been taken away from her and for her love "many a man has died" (P.82). While her symbolical significance is being unravelled, the process of revelation takes place through a backward dimension in time. This offers scope for poetic reverberation which is rendered substantial by reiterative inter-play of such folk-symbols as the bride, the bridal bed, the wedding clothes, the strangers and the lovers, etc.

In spite of all these poetic ingredients, the play fails to become a poetic drama. It is because, instead of becoming profoundly political through the historico-social working out of the political moment, it is only superficially so, articulating only the folkloric view of political action. Had the play been given political proportions of the philosophical sort, it would have developed a complex pattern, and illuminated factors such as why Ireland has so

1. In being thus distrustful of the scope and complexity of the political moment, Yeats is similar to Croce who in Politics and Morals (P.22) regards politics as subsidiary to ethics. Later on in life it is this distrust that Yeats articulates (The Collected Poems, P.632) in the following lines by referring to this play:

"All that I have said and done
Now that I am old and ill
Turns into a question till
I lie awake night after night,
Did that play of mine send out
Certain men the English shot?"
far remained subdued by the British, and whether liberation can be attained with the help of any external agency. But the play does not cope with these issues. So with all the tautness of its plot and the piquancy of its dialogues, it remains only a poetic play in prose.

( v )

In his next play, The Shadowy Waters, Yeats falls back upon the tapestry-like technique of The Countess Cathleen and tries "to create for a few people who love symbol, a play that will be more a ritual than a play and leave upon the mind an impression like that of tapestry when the forms only half reveal themselves amid the shadowy folds." Notwithstanding similarity in technique, the design of this play is extremely taut, almost as a pattern of geometric parallelism because the episodes are held within the dramatic situation rather than scattered about it. This is because the play owes its inception to a singular dramatic impulse seeking to prove the validity of Shelley's observation that "the sacred emotions" of love can "lift us out of the little world of self." Thus the play "depicts a love resulting in ecstatic union and separation from the world, symbolised by death and effected by the imagination." It has before it horizons of the super-country where its sexual aspect becomes free from all the

1. W.B. Yeats, Programme Note on the Play printed in 'INIFAIL' August 1905
2. P.B. Shelley, Shelley's Prose (edited by David Lee Clark), Albuquerque 1954 P.289
repressions which it has undergone. As Roland Barthes would like to observe, "Such love might be called sororal Eros; its future is tranquil, for it is thwarted only by what is outside itself; its success appears to derive from its very origin; because it has consented to start from a mediation, misfortune is not fatal to it."

This theme of sororal Eros works itself out against the spatial background of the vast, multitudinous ocean. Having the universality of space and eternity of time, this ocean is primordial, indistinct and supra-temporal. Sailors sailing on its surface can either be called back to their hearths and homes or beckoned to the horizons lurking ahead, but unapproachable in space and time. The characters are divisible into these two categories: the Sailors are mundane and are tired of "the waste places of the great sea" (p.147); but Forgael is supramundane and, led by the Druids he is always haunted by "unheard of passion — some ever-living woman" (p.150). Uniting them are Aibric and Dectora, the one descending from the supramundane to the mundane and the other ascending from the mundane to the supramundane spheres of life. While the former are moved by the reality of mundane reason, the latter are captivated by the ideal of supramundane passion. Thus the characters are moved respectively by mundane reason and supramundane passion.

The characters adopt poetry or prose as medium for articulation in keeping with the world that they inhabit. The sailors invariably speak in prose and their expression always remains at the matter-of-fact

1. Roland Barthes, On Racine, New York 1964 P.10
level. Generally, they do not use images, and if ever they use one, they keep it solid and opaque and do not let levels of meanings accrue to it. Forgael, however, is always haunted by,

"- images, analogies
The mystic bread, the sacramental wine,
The red rose where the two shafts of the cross,
Body and soul, waking and sleep, death, life,
Whatever meaning ancient allegorists

Have settled on, are mixed into one joy." (P.152)

He utters monologues when he is surrounded by Sailors and speaks in solitary dialogues when he is talking to Aibric and Dectora. Whether in monologue or in dialogue, he gives evidence of literary ancestry "compounded out of Byron's Manfred, Shelley's Poet in 'Alastor' and Keats's Endymion." Like all these he expresses his uncompromising quest for an impossible beloved through words which at times attain apocalyptic proportions but mostly remain Pre-Raphaelitic in tone, though evidencing "the most perfect expressions of the vague enchanted beauty of that school."

Aibric and Dectora are mobile characters who express themselves through dramatic utterances, Aibric in low mimetic mode and Dectora in high mimetic mode. Dectora grows lyrical when she becomes a denizen of the supramundane world. A Pre-Raphaelitic aroma accrues to her utterances though they rarely become "mere wool-balls of

1. Harold Bloom, Yeats (paper-back), New York 1972
Pre-Raphaelite lyricism." As Dr. Rajan has said there is "progression in the imagery" of Dectora's utterances. On that account, they have "animation and poetic logic."

In spite of these promising factors, The Shadowy Waters is not great or solid poetic drama. Approaching its theme from one point of view, it does not let the contrary point of view emerge through the inter-personal or intra-personal conflicts of the characters. So these conflicts are quite evanescent in the otherwise thin texture of the play which, thus, remains surficial in theme, rhythm, action and character.

( vi )

After having thrice tried his hand at dramatising a single episode, Yeats turns in The King's Threshold to the dramatisation of several episodes — a practice tried unsuccessfully first in The Countess Cathleen. Now as the tragedy of the mage-poet it is a success. The mage-poet is essentially an inhabitant of the super-country who transfigures life by illuminating sublime moments in it. Evidently, he

1. Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice, Princeton 1959 P.42
2. W.B. Yeats, London 1965 P.44

As an example, Dr Rajan takes the following utterance of Dectora:

"0 flower of the branch, 0 bird among the leaves,
0 silver fish that my two hands have taken
Out of the running stream ——."

Analysing it he observes, "The flower suggests natural life in its abundance and consummation. The bird which adds the idea of movement and migration to that of growth is significantly among the leaves ... The fish is silver because it is so in reality but also because it suggests the lunar principle with which Forgael is identified.——"
nurtures ultimate expectations for poetry as a mode of revealing, transfiguring and glorifying life. Blake and Shelley, the two most exalted poet-mentors of Yeats, upheld this philosophy of poetry. Blake believed that "the world renewed its powers of seeing all things in the bright sculptures of Los's Hall;" and Shelley expected poetry to participate in "the eternal, the infinite and the one." In other words, poetry is for them the medium of expressing wisdom acquired through experience. Wisdom stands for traditional consciousness and experience for traditional awareness of life accumulated in the poet's personality.

The mage-poet is able to achieve this goal because universality of space and eternity of time are the essential verities of the life of the super-country. Seachan, hero of The King's Threshold, upholds these verities for poetry in the kingdom of King Guaire. He requires from poetry

"Images of the life that was in Eden,
About the child-bed of the world, that it,
Looking upon those images, might bear
Triumphant children." (PP.111-112)

As a custodian of this poetry he sits at "the great council of the State" and shares authority with "Bishops, Soldiers and Makers of the Law." (P.108) In essential respects, he is what Arnold Hauser would like to call, like Michelangelo, "the demonically impelled artist" whom Yeats greatly admired, — "the first to be completely possessed by his

   New York 1965 P.159
2. P.B. Shelley, Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism
   (edited by John Shaw Cross) London 1909 PP.123-124
idea and for whom nothing exists but his idea — who feels a deep sense of responsibility towards his gifts and sees a higher and superhuman power in his own artistic genius." In the changed circumstances, he is asked to renounce the old apocalyptic right of the mage-poet and is, in return, promised

"— a house with grass and tillage land,
An annual payment, jewels and silken wear,
Or anything but that old right of the poets." (P.110)

In other words he is asked to realise, like Baudelaire, that "the likeliest place from which a living could be earned was the investment-market", and only in the investment-market was to be claimed "poet's dignity in society which had no dignity of any kind to give away."

Seachan, who has apocalyptic expectations as a mage-poet, cannot commit artistic suicide by renouncing the sublime right of poetry. All the same he has no option but to commit physical suicide because poetry's rights have been usurped. He fasts at the threshold of the King because "suicide is a direct threat against the oppressor, it is a graphic representation of his responsibility." His confrontation continues to the end, because he cannot reconcile himself to the abrogation of those rights which poetry has so far enjoyed and which hegemonic persons, who have usurped these rights, are not prepared

2. Walter Benjamin quoted in The Necessity of Art of Ernst Fischer, London 1964 P.69
to restore. So the rupture between Seachan and the hegemonic persons goes on widening. After several mortifications he becomes one with the most inanimate part of the super-country. As the Oldest Pupil states,

"--- driven from the populous doors
He seeks high waters and the mountain birds
To claim a portion of their solitude." (P.142)

While he fasts at the threshold of the King, several persons come to him contesting his stand and imploring him to break his fast. Their contestation takes place in the form of sequential episodes. It is from the dramatisation of these sequential episodes that there emerges the dramatic pattern of this play. In a way, these sequential episodes are mini-episodes and they coalesce organically and coherently into a major episode, the rhythmic variation of which is representative of the tragic destiny of Seachan. This happens because the sequence in which the different characters accost and contest Seachan, has about itself crescendo rhythms.

The play begins with a dispassionate argument between the King and the Pupils. It lays the basis of the dilemma that with the perishing of Seachan, will perish the good name of the King and for that matter of the whole of civic society. The dispassionate discourse of the King obviously leads the Pupils to the conclusion, "that old custom's not worth dying for" (P.109). If this conclusion changes into conviction, it can prove disastrous for Seachan for the Pupils are
the integral projections of his poetic personality. The second episode contains Seachan's conversation with his Pupils. With passion and vehemence, he explains the dilemma from a perspective that takes for granted the apocalyptic significance of poetry. Indicting the whole of civic society at the altar of poetry, he declares that in the absence of poetry life would be

"Like a woman
That looking on the cloven lips of a hare,
Brings forth a hare-lipped child." (P.112)

In the absence of life, however, poetry does not degenerate because

"When all falls
In ruin, poetry calls out in joy,
Being the scattering hand, the bursting pod,
The victim's joy among the holy flame,
God's laughter at the shattering of the world." (P.114)

In the episodes to follow there is explicit elaboration of the civic point of view and implicit assertion of its poetic antinomy. This contrapuntal process of elaboration and assertion has the rhythm of music rising in pitch and intensity. For example, the third episode is quite loose from the spatial point of view because in it such persons talk to Seachan as have only an administrative interest in his fast. The Mayor regards Seachan's fast "as a matter of no importance"; (P.117) the Chamberlain views it as a threat to the entire hegemonic set-up; the Monk disapproves of it because it releases "wanton imagination"; (P.129) and the Soldier dismisses it by calling
it "a good riddance". (P.124) They talk either in communique-type prose or in flat verse showing that their rationalised views derive only from commonsense. Scattered in between are the apparently incoherent but essentially coherent exchanges of the Cripples which in a subdued tone express the sympathy of subaltern humanity for the cause of Seachan. Towards the end there are the remonstrances of the Girls with the Soldier. They show the interest of the professionals in the destiny of the creative artist.

This episode is followed by the one in which first the Princesses and then Fedlem remonstrate with Seachan entirely from the human point of view, the case of the Princesses being entirely impersonal and that of Fedlem entirely personal. Seachan takes from the Princesses the cup that they have brought but when he feels that their human interest is meant to divert him from his apocalyptic purpose, he throws it away, heaping curses upon them. Because of the physical exertion he feels even more exhausted than the Cripples. So he is almost delirious when Fedlem, his fiancée, comes to take him to his village. She is interested in his physical security rather than spiritual integrity. For a moment, he puts himself at her disposal and supported by her comes to a table. He even takes from her the bread soaked in wine but then he at once throws it aside with vehemence and anger. To assuage her feelings he tells her that howsoever much kneaded in love her bread was, if eaten it would have tarnished the love of people in future. Kissing her he says,

"If I had eaten when you bid me, sweetheart,
The kiss of multitudes in times to come
Had been the poorer." (P.139)
The last episode consists of the King's meeting with Seachan. Grown desperate, the King is dominating and oppressive rather than benign and directive. As proof of his desperation he has brought the Pupils with halters around their necks. He feels that if impervious to his own plight, Seachan cannot remain so to that of his Pupils who are the projections of his poetic personality. His malignant scheme does not work because not only does Seachan himself become more defiant but even his Pupils begin to exhort him to defy the King to the ultimate end. At last, exulting over death,

"King! King! Dead faces laugh, "(P.141)

he falls, then rises and at last breathes his last. His Pupils take his dead body to the grave hoping that some great race in future will honour the traditional rights of poetry. Lifting the trumpets, they

"Cry to the great race that is to come." (P.143)

Thus the successive episodes of the play reach their tragic end. All through, they are united into an integral whole by the alternately "destructive, joyful, apocalyptic visionary" or "mournful, diseased, delirious" mind of Seachan. Corresponding to his mind is his imagery that becomes apocalyptic or demonic as demanded by the exigencies of the situation. In moments of exultation he uses apocalyptic imagery derived from death, destruction, reverie and trance because it "presents — the categories of reality in the forms of human desire, as indicated by the forms they assume under the work of human civilisation." In moments of vehemence it is demonic imagery derived

from leprosy, pollution, sickness and degradation because it relates to "the vast, the menacing, stupid powers of nature." In a low tone his Pupils also use this antinomial imagery but his adversaries speak language that is more or less free from it.

On the whole, the language of the play has a thrust forward, no matter whether it is used by Seachan and his Pupils or by the King and his courtiers. Syncopated to the required extent, it remains true to the mind of the character and the dramatic situation in which he is involved at a particular moment. No doubt, in its ecstatic moments it tends to inculcate romantic heroics uncongenial to the nature of dramatic verse; but even then it keeps them under tight control. This is a quality which so far had been slipping the grasp of the playwright. On the basis of this as well as other qualities, The King's Threshold can be regarded as Yeats's first great poetic drama in the tragic genre.

(vii)

The next two plays, Deirdre and On Baile's Strand are Yeats's greatest poetic dramas in the tragic genre. They both signify that in the last analysis the essence of life of the supercountry is universal in space and eternal in time though both spatially and temporally it is tragically confounded by civilisation. But it is glorified and transfigured in the process, thereby suffusing these plays with marmorean stillness, turbulent energy and tragic intensity.

In Deirdre this conflict is developed from the crisis of

1. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton 1957 PP.141, 147
what Roland Barthes would like to call the "predatory Eros" which is "an immediate one; it is born abruptly; its generation admits of no latency, it appears in the manner of an absolute Event." Its absoluteness is immobilised in the tragic tableaux through Deirdre, who, born and brought up amid hills surrounded by the sea-shore, has drunk deep at passion, fountain-head of the life of the super-country. Supposed to be the prospective queen of King Conchubar, she woos or is wooed by Naiosc, her male surrogate and throwing the king's command to the winds, elopes with him into the wildest part of the countryside. After seven years, she returns to civilisation on the assurance that she would be pardoned by Conchubar, the pretext for pardon being that he needs somebody young, famous and popular like Naiosc to lead troops against his enemies. This assurance, held out through Fergus, is false because actually he lays the whole scheme as a snare to murder Naiosc and take Deirdre to the bridal chamber decorated with "Libyan dragon skin or the ivory of the fierce unicorn". (P.175). However, in executing his plan requiring great ingenuity, he succeeds only partially, i.e., Naiosc is murdered but Deirdre is not taken to the bridal chamber. She commits suicide and vanishes with her lover into "the secret wilderness of their love". (P.202) As it is the play has a very tense structure. Episodes and stage-pictures comprising it are unified into a single scene subordinated in all its variations to "the central figure and her paradigm of roles." So the episodes get "transformed into the movements within the highly intellectual, delicately organised soul

1. Roland Barthes, On Racine, New York 1964
soul of the chief character," all things contributing to the accentuation of her tragic destiny. For example, the locale where this tragic destiny consummates itself, is topographically in tune with it. The tragedy takes place in a guest-house situated in hills amongst which Deirdre was born and brought up. The whole atmosphere is bathed in the pale light of the setting sun, which connotes the lovers' end who, in vehemence and passion, are like the inexhaustible sun itself. Through its open doors and windows, the guest-house is open to eaves-dropping by dark-faced men whose speechless movements show them as emblems of death itself.

This guest-house contrasts in all respects with the wild world over which Deirdre and Naios have wandered for several years. The tragic fate descends upon them with no elaborate dramatic preparation. It is preceded by only a prologue-like conversation of the Musicians in which they reflect upon the archetypal core of the story. As the First Musician points out with completely natural deliberation,

"I have a story right, my wanderers,
That has so mixed up with fable in our songs
That all seemed fabulous." (p.171)

Articulated through musical intonation, this archetypal core, having partaken of the character of folklore, tends to become eternal in time and universal in space. The Musicians give to it a new local habitation and name by associating with it the guest-house to which the lovers have come and the hills which skirt it from all sides. Their

1. Peter Ure, Yeats, The Playwright, London 1963 PP.55, 42
is overwhelming that Fergus's assertion to the contrary

"... that all things change

in the world,

And hatred turns to love and love to hate,"(P.174)
does not hold water. Moreover, at the subconscious level even he is
snared by the sense of tragic destiny signified by the archetypal kernel.
While telling the Musicians what they should sing as a welcome-song, he
says,

"Begin, begin, of some old king and queen,

Of Lugaidh Redstripe or another; no, not him,

He and his lady perished wretchedly."(P.176)
The ambivalence of this statement signifies Fergus's conscious rejection
and subconscious acceptance of the archetypal kernel. From this emerges
the prototypal content of the play which stands midway between the
archetypal kernel and the tragic destiny of Deirdre and Naiosf.
Throughout the play they insist upon the propinquity of their fate with
the fate of their prototypes. Naiosf does so rather reluctantly; when
invited to the chess-board to play, he exclaims,

"It is the board

Where Lugaidh Redstripe and that wife of his

Who had a seamew's body half the year

Played at the chess upon the night they died." (P.179)
This overwhelming sense of propinquity notwithstanding, Naiosf does not
want to become a shadow of his prototype. He invokes all his gallantry
to defeat his tragic destiny. Oblivious of everything but his blind
passion, he chases Conchubar into the jungle as a hunter would chase his
quarry, little knowing that he, himself, can become the hunted
vis-à-vis Conchubar, the hunter. When all his efforts fail and he
is actually entangled in a net "like a bird or a fish" (P.194), he
dies defiantly and becomes a surrogate of his prototype.

Judged so, Deirdre comes up as a far more complex character.
She shows her reality nowhere else but "in the soul itself — whether
of gesture, or of speech, or of action, coming out of personality,
the soul's image." The moment she enters, she begins to prepare
herself for the role that her archetype and prototype want of her.

With no strain on her nerves, she keeps up concord between her choice
of the soul and her diagnosis of events. Before Naíose is entangled
in a net, she tries her best to defeat her tragic destiny that is
inexorably overtaking her and her lover. At first she practises
dignified dissumulation in the wearing of ornaments but abandons it
when Fergus sees through her stratagem. Then she gets ready to destroy
her beauty that has brought "misery and homeless wandering",

"To clip this hair to baldness, blacken my skin,

With walnut juice, and rear my face with briars."(P.186)

Unable to avert the tragic destiny, she "fights for her
death and makes her death reflect her." This reflection is communicated
by her gestures and movements but much more than those, it is her
language that is the vehicle for this communication. Though "entirely
in one tone — largely at one tempo", her language has "grave

1. W.B. Yeats, Plays and Controversies, London 1923 P.124
Deirdre's language is retrospective and liberated as the Language of Racine's Phaedra is introspective and imprisoned. Her tone is that of non-chalance while Phaedra's tone is weighed down with the consciousness of guilt. Thus Deirdre's language assures to her the essence of life to which she has avowed all her love and passion.

The language of Naiose and the Musicians is in harmony with this avowal while that of Conchubar and Fergus is in counterpoint. Naiose's language is comparatively asymmetrical lacking the proportions of equipoise immanent in the language of Deirdre. Similarly, the language of the Musicians is comparatively unilinear because it is invariably spoken in symbiosis with music whose rigorously temporal quality does not let spatial and visual proportions accrue to the words. The language of Fergus is naive as of Conchubar is crafty. The naivety of the former and craftiness of the latter show themselves through flat and involved sentences. Naturally the language of both enriches in a contrapuntal way Deirdre's language that is enriched in a harmonic way by that of Naiose and the Musicians. Ultimately the play becomes as much a tragedy of the non-chalant word as it is of a person avowing the values of non-chalance.

Likewise, the play is the tragedy of the non-chalant symbol symbolising the super-country through the archetypal symbols of the ocean and the land and stream-images of birds, eagles, flood and wilderness derived from these archetypes. The archetype of the ocean signifies the protagonists' passionate selves which

"— know nothing but this body, nothing
But that old vehement, bewildering kiss."(P.192)

In its still and stormy aspects — still in the case of Deirdre and stormy in the case of Naiose — it pervades their selves so much that like "the wild men" of Dylan Thomas they cannot but

"Rage, rage against the dying of light."

The archetype of the land signifies vastness which percolates as wander-lust into the innermost beings of the protagonists. Working itself out through their essential selves, the archetype of the land imparts spatial and horizontal dimensions to their passions which are imparted temporal and vertical dimensions by the archetype of the ocean. The interplay of these archetypes works in such a way that Deirdre and Naiose become inseparable from each other.

The stream-images of birds, eagles, flood, wilderness, etc. pertain to height and journey. Deirdre herself and other characters associate images of height and journey with her to invoke the grandeur of her personality. Born and brought "in a house upon a hill-side", (P.172) she wandered amongst the valleys. Revealing this aspect of her personality, she tells Naiose and Fergus that they were born to wander because

"The jewels have been reaped by the innocent sword
Upon a mountain, and a mountain bred me;
But who can tell what change can come to love
Among the valleys? I speak no falsehood now

1. Dylan Thomas, Collected Poems, London 1964
Away to windy summits, and there mock
The night-jar and the valley-keeping bird!" (P.186)

These images are associated with Naiose as well, but only to bring out the tragic failure of his passion. Though not born at a place situated at a height, he climbs to such a place to carry away Deirdre. Evidently, the urge to be at height is a core of his existence, and life without Deirdre is a fall from the summit at which his union with her has situated him. Irrevocably and irretrievably inveigled into a net, he oscillates between the urge to be at height and the futility that it ultimately sets him to. To express this urge, he employs the symbol of the eagle:

O my eagle!
Why do you beat vain wings upon the rock
When hollow night's above? (P.196)

The essence of these images nurtured by the archetypes, is frustrated by the man-made cage into which Naiose is caught actually and Deirdre could be caught metaphorically. In consequence Naiose is led to slaughter and Deirdre to suicide. Only through these definitive modes do they escape the "empty cage and tangled wire". (P.202) The cage is rendered futile but the overflowing turbulent energy of the lovers also ends along with.

( viii )

In On Baile's Strand Yeats explores the tragic destiny of the super-country vis-a-vis civilisation through the crisis of the
Father. This crisis develops due to two tendencies. One is of blood which is "trans-temporal" and regards the progeny as the eternal emanation of the Father. The other is of authority, i.e., "what comes after him is descended from him, ineluctably committed to the problematics of loyalty." The first tendency is the more primordial which tends to abolish the problematics of discontinuity through parricide and infanticide; the second is comparatively modern which tries to maintain the problematics of continuity through the conquest of the foes.

The first tendency is embodied by Cuchulain, the composite Irish analogue of the Greek mythological heroes. Being Irish and of a land the ethos and culture of which have so far been infused with man's relationship with nature, he is less "suited to human conditions" and less "set within the conditions of a historic framework." He has never begotten a son in wedlock to inherit his kingdom. However, a son incidently born of his passion for Aoife, the high, laughing, turbulent queen with "stone-pale cheek and red-brown hair", (P.258) comes to Baile's strand and fights a fierce duel with him on the Sohrab-Rustum pattern. Mortally wounded by his father, he is identified as Cuchulain's son. Cuchulain goes immediately mad and in his madness fights against the unGovernable waves of the ocean. The second tendency is embodied by Conchubar who is deeply paternal towards his children and is worried over the danger that Cuchulain poses to them.

on account of the wildness of his blood. As he explicitly tells his rival,

"... every day my children come and say:
This man is growing harder to endure.
How can we be at safety with this man
That nobody can buy or bid or bind?
We shall be at his mercy when you are gone;
He burns the earth as if he were fire
And time can never touch him." (PP.255-56)

In the first episode of the play, Conchubar calls Cuchulain to his court to elicit from him the promise that he will be his bondsman, loyal to him during his life and to his children after his death. The promise starts at a note of deep divergence because Cuchulain projects himself as contemptuous of the love of wedlock and the procreation of children. He has had only amorous passion for women of his own dispensation. This passion has aroused both love and hatred. The love has been evanescent, the hatred enduring as granite. In his own words he has never

"--- known love but as a kiss
In the mid battle, and a difficult truce
Of oil and water, candles and dark night,
Hillside and hollow, the hot-footed sun
And the cold, sliding, slippery-footed moon,
A brief forgiveness between opposites
That have been hatreds for three times the age
Of this long-established ground" (P.259)
Similarly, he is ambivalent in his attitude towards children. Being childless himself, he does not understand Conchubar's love for his children. Rather childlessness seems to him to be a source of solitary grandeur because it saves him from leaving unbecoming descendents behind. Thankful to his own childlessness, he remarks,

"I think myself most lucky that I leave
No pallid ghost or mockery of a man
To drift and mutter in the corridors
Where I have laughed and sung." (P.256)

Both these factors make Cuchulain overflow with Dionysian turbulence to which Conchubar reacts with Appolonian serenity. Wedlock has not distracted Conchubar with amorous passion, it has provided him with children. Deeply concerned for whose welfare, he is able to perceive the hollowness implicit in Cuchulain's exultation over his childlessness. He reminds Cuchulain of the disconsolation he experiences in his disturbed sleep:

--- I know you to the bone,
I have heard you cry, aye, in your very sleep,
'I have no son!' and with such bitterness
That I have gone upon my knees and prayed
That it might be amended. (P.257)

Cuchulain and Conchubar are thus "type and anti-type" to each other and they articulate themselves alternately in passionate and rational syntax. Towards the end of the episode, Cuchulain


P.333
subordinates himself to Conchubar, accepting his wisdom in exchange for his "might of hand and burning heart". (P.260) This subordination is ritualistically expressed through the choric song of the Women wherein fire is invoked to drive out Shape-changers and tie the proselyte to "the threshold and the hearthstone". (P.262) Reading elemental but philosophical significance in Cuchulain's proselytisation, Conchubar remarks,

"We are one being, as these flames are one. I give my wisdom, and I take your strength." (P.263)

Though presented ritualistically, this proselytisation is ambiguous because Cuchulain's motive for doing so does not become explicit. A man of antithetical dispensation, he cannot submit to primary dispensation under the pressure of his associates. This submission cannot transvalue his self which only some interior motive could have done. But this interior motive does not reveal itself, and the play has "heart-mysteries" which are "impressive and rightly connected, but hardly clearly defined." ¹

In the second episode, Cuchulain's transvaluation is put to a tragic test. It has "commitment to time" as the previous episode has commitment to space. Denoting a lot of temporal momentum, it starts with the advent of The Young Man to Conchubar's court, who, the moment he arrives, challenges Cuchulain to a duel. The reason for this challenge lies in Cuchulain's own self i.e. The Young Man ²

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² Denis Donoghue, *Yeats*, Fontana London 1971, p. 100
is his own son from Aoife who has brought him up to wreak vengeance upon Cuchulain — she is also a being of antithetical dispensation.

In spite of or because of the challenge, Cuchulain develops an overwhelming filial affection for The Young Man and offers to him the cloak woven by Women of the Country-under-Wave from the fleeces of the sea. The cloak was presented to him by his father:

> My father gave me this,
> He came to try me, rising up at dawn
> Out of the cold dark of the rich sea;
> He challenged me to battle, but before
> My sword had touched his sword, told me his name,
> Gave me this cloak and vanished. (P.268)

The offer of the cloak works to the contrary: "the mention of the sea leaps forward to the play's climax and locks the whole action in a rhythm of recurrence that seems larger than any individual fate; the father kills the son as the father must kill the son again."

After several remonstrances with Conchubar, Cuchulain fights against The Young Man whom he kills as Rostum had killed Sohrab and goes mad on learning that "it is his own son he has slain". (P.276) In madness he fights against the ungovernable sea which is a polyvalent symbol for the Collective Unconscious, Sex and blind inadvertence. With the closing of the episode, Cuchulain, "the sun-hero sinks into the murderous innocence of the sea which drowns heroic innocence."

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1. Balachandra Rajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965
2. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972
Both these episodes help each other in bringing out the theme of the play. The first reveals the reasons which urged Cuchulain to enter into a duel with the Young Man. The second retrospectively reveals the dilemma which makes Cuchulain confuse illusion and reality by transvaluing himself at Conchubar's instance. Their inter-relationship, spatial and integral rather than temporal and dialectical, does not reveal itself through dramatic action that may be immanent/historical, but through such classical movements as the reverse, the recognition and the catastrophe. So the play has spatial pattern, accentuated by the Rostum-Sohrab parallel and the hint that in a way the play is only a repetition of a previous potential action of Cuchulain's father.

This spatial and integral inter-relationship of the two episodes is framed by the comic plot in which the Fool and the Blind Man are the counter-truths to the tragic and the pragmatic truths of Cuchulain and Conchubar. Cuchulain and the Fool "represent the self, all body, strength, and appetite while Conchubar and the Blind Man represent the soul, all wisdom, morality and restraint." By setting them to quarrel in a lower key, Yeats develops a squalid antithesis of the main plot. The purpose of this antithesis is to reinforce the emotion of the multitude, powerfully gained through a similar antithesis between the highly sweepingly poetic and squalid images of the main characters and the comic characters.

In keeping with this antithesis, the comic characters are masked and their masks accentuate their essence by subduing their appearance.

The emotion of the multitude becomes all the more powerful for the fact that the language of the comic characters is antithetical to that of the heroic characters. It is low-toned prose "good enough to make us aware that Yeats's blank verse is not developing altogether promisingly for the theatre." His blank-verse is high-toned which can "reflect much more of the psyche's posturings" than mere exultation. It has a super-flux which denotes "recalcitrant stuff" in subject-matter and "incongruities" in the truth-content of the play. The play ends at an unresolved note which has been more or less there in all Yeats's plays in the tragic genre but which is superseded in dance-plays based upon the Noh plays of Japan.

III

The third and final phase of the dramatic career of Yeats is that of dance-drama moulded upon the Noh pattern. This dance-drama is original in the etymological sense of the word, i.e., it grasps the roots of the playwright's world-vision and of the reality that he means to communicate. His world-vision encompasses "ersatz union" of the intermingling contraries almost identical with the union of Animus

and Anima in Jung and "Man and Woman" in Spengler wherein it is held that "man makes History, woman is History." The reality which it interprets is marked by "the simplicity of paradigms." As a result his world-vision remains no longer divided into the conscious social and political aspect on the one hand and the universal, primary and the eternal aspect, on the other. Naturally it identifies itself with wisdom, the epic side of truth, i.e., heightened commonsense bereft of its heterogeneous and discontinuous elements. Similarly, reality of paradigms divests itself further of change, differentiation and complexity and acquires the universality of experience. In other words, the dance-drama is completely spatial because what is chronos becomes kairos in it.

Because of this spatial sense, dance-drama grows from an archetypal story rather than from a plot that may be a spatio-temporal amplification of it. It is centred upon an incident which is generalised and universal and not particular and historical. Correspondingly, its characters are not differentiated and concrete human beings whose awareness tends simultaneously to identify thought and feeling, contains the contrasts between the particular and the general, and the individual and the universal, progresses towards ever deeper meanings while keeping up its distinctive identity, and works as a nodal point from which may develop associative ideas and feelings. Instead, the awareness of characters in dance-drama

is general and universal as a result of which they are iconic configurations of archetypes from the Collective Unconscious or Anima Mundi, as Yeats has called it.

In other words, the characters of the dance-drama are symbolical and they let their semiology get precedence over their individuality. They are invariably masked because by making the particular the general and the individual the universal, the mask makes universal anonymity of the face the index of the mind of the character. This process is accentuated further by dance and music which are introduced as modes of gesture and articulation by them. As Frank Kermode has pointed out, "The icon of the dancer is one of Yeats's reconciling images, containing life in death, death in life, movement and stillness, action and contemplation, body and soul." Its introduction automatically divests gestures of the characters of their individual and particular qualities, by making them symbolical by suggesting contents and feelings through them.

Music does to articulation what dance does to gesture. Animated articulation changes its intonation into epiphanic incantation. Then it acquires eloquence with "greater and greater starkness" colouring its rhythm and diction. This eloquence is not required to depend upon rhetorical devices expressing a "finite static world-view"; they are not "hierarchical deployments of expressive devices." It is

1. Frank Kermode, _The Romantic Image_, London 1957 P.48
the eloquence of a noble vernacular in which the metaphorical meanings of words developing with changes in civilization are concentrated upon their etymological meanings. Its rhythms project themselves through irregular blank verse of the characters and the lyrical choral interlude of the Musicians.

The theatre recommended for this symbolical drama is equally symbolical, i.e., it is completely antithetical to the naturalistic theatre. Being "distinguished, indirect, symbolic", it exhausts the possibilities of The People's Theatre which Yeats had recommended for plays written in the tragic genre. Its housing does not pose any problem because it can be done in a very small auditorium with no proscenium arch or stage attached to it. It can as well be an aristocratic friend's drawing-room, being thus similar to the chamber required for the presentation of chamber-music. Its actors and audience are necessarily to be persons having Unity of Being but yearning for Unity of Culture.

This symbolical theatre is essentially anti-theatrical. Envisaging no physical distance it accords with under-distance and holds aesthetic distance only to ensure empathic rumination over the play staged in it. Yeats suggests that this aesthetic distance should be established through decor, costume, gesture, speech and mask: "verse, ritual and dance in association with action require that gesture, costume, facial expression, stage-arrangement must help in keeping the

1. "Chamber-music", as T.W. Adorno (quoted by George Steiner in *Language and Silence*, P.338) has pointed out "with its specific assumptions in terms of space, requires the small room large enough to accommodate chosen guests."
door" open to "the deep of the mind that had hitherto been too subtle for our habitation." Generalising it, he concludes, "As deep of the mind can only be approached through what is most human, most delicate, we should distrust bodily distance, mechanism and loud noise."

So Yeats's dance-drama is the most metatheatrical drama. Instead of action and character, it emphasises pattern and rhythm, fascination for which had been nurtured in Yeats from boyhood. For example, all his life he upheld strong anti-impressionistic tendencies on the basis of which he despised mass, surface and abstraction. He held abstract art to be incompatible with life and cubist art to be rhetorical arising from the confusion of the abstract technique with the rhythmical tendency. To the contrary, the Greek, the Byzantine, the Renaissance and the Pre-Raphaelite art convinced him of the significance of pattern and rhythm which, in the field of drama, were upheld the most by Maeterlinck and Mallarme. Yeats imbibed their influence and developed the dance-drama by inter-relating the symbolical technique with the Noh pattern. Thus the dance-drama is an occidental surrogate of the oriental Noh play of Japan. Creatively imbibing factors from the Noh, Yeats's dance-drama puts them to its own creative use. According to Denis Donoghue, the factors thus imbibed are: (a) "a theatre-form of proved validity, a means of organising and therefore of realising his material, a means of perceiving the forms and shapes latent in it; (b) a way of under-cutting the mere representation of the surface of life (though in this there is loss as well as gain); and (c) an elaborate store of non-verbal expression which could liberate

1. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, New York 1961 PP.224-225
The mind from the will by the ritual nature of its eloquence."  

The process of imbibing and turning these factors to his creative use was a life-long process for Yeats though its acme was reached only in the last two decades of his life. As Frank Kermode has observed, "Much of his earlier thought on the drama must have seemed to him a steady and unwitting progress in the direction of the NoH." But the NoH that he developed was not the Japanese NoH. It is something new and original that "he almost invented himself."  

No wonder, Yeats's earlier reflections upon tragedy, tragic joy and emotion of the multitude, anticipate almost all the aspects of dance-drama. Similarly The King's Threshold and Deirdre give evidence of his incipient practice of this genre.

All the same, Yeats became a playwright of dance-drama only in the last two decades of his life. It is because by that time he had become totally disillusioned with both the hegemonic and subaltern aspects of Irish society. Since the gaining of independence, a section of the Catholic peasantry had substituted itself for the traditional Protestant aristocracy. The new ruling class was no longer non-chalant, cultured and compassionate and the old ruling class had become introvert, cynical and fastidious. So the ancient sanctity of life had given way to voracity for material progress which, being capitalistic in nature, could not impart to the new ruling class an assurance of its future and a capacity for planned governance of its entire life.

1. Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice, Princeton 1959 P.54
2. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, London 1957 P.77
Thus the fall of the traditional aristocracy had led to the crisis of progress, which instead of realising the most concrete aspect of life, was dispersing it. It was difficult for Yeats to perceive that this crisis was not of the entire people but of those sections only which had no vision to transform the dispersed society into a unified community. In a way, Yeats's plight was like that of Angelus Novus in Walter Benjamin's description of a painting by Paul Klee, in which Novus "sees a single catastrophe incessantly piling ruins upon ruins and hurling them down at its feet ---- The storm drives it inexorably towards future, to which it turns its back whilst the heap of ruins before it grows sky high."

In this catastrophic situation Yeats could not do better than explore in dramatic terms the paradigms of the super-country, now become that of the mind. These paradigms, with roots in the inter-mingling of the contraries, could pose themselves as (a) nature vis-à-vis super-nature, (b) past vis-à-vis present and future, (c) sex vis-à-vis soul, and (d) apocalypse vis-à-vis flux of time. Since these paradigms are of the super-country of the mind, the playwright could explore them as only "a lyrical dramatist" in plays-in-miniature by virtue of his affirmative capability. The dance-dramas of Yeats give evidence of this achievement in abundant measure.

(ii)

At the Hawk's Well is the first dance-drama by Yeats. It

deals with the paradigm of nature vis-a-vis supernature but with a variation, i.e., nature is signified by man and supernature by his pursuit of immortality through reckless valour and virility. As Helen Vendler has pointed out immortality is not taken here "in the sense of divinity: it only makes one --- live for ever." In other words, it is taken in the sense of eternity which is the essential aspect of supernature. Being the absolute form of nature, supernature is divested even of that time which pervades nature even in its spatialised form. By moulding itself into man's pursuit of the ideal, the paradigm ultimately assumes human proportions.

The playwright holds this ideal can be realised in two ways, the passive and the active way. The passive way involves renunciation and withdrawal and is not essentially what it appears to be. Essentially it is only an illusion, while the active way is real because it involves human assertion through war and sex. War and sex do not have social import here: war does not posit the possibility of the change of a disharmonious society into a harmonious community through violent but collective efforts of the people; and sex does not envisage the probability of the procreation of progeny capable of achieving Unity of Being in the context of Unity of Culture. Instead, they both have individual import. By asserting themselves in the context of the individual, they emerge as the essential analogues of nature the different species of which propagate and protect themselves through war and sex. Consequently, the meaning of the play comes to

be that man becomes immortal when in human terms he asserts war and sex, which are nature's conspicuous attributes.

This meaning is conveyed through Cuchulain's visit to the magic-well of immortality where for the last fifty years, the Old Man has been fruitlessly waiting for the water to rise up to bless him. In spite of the Old Man's advice to the contrary, Cuchulain sits down there to wait for the "miraculous water". (P.212) To divert him away, The Guardian of the Well begins to dance like "bird, woman or witch". (P.216) This dance arouses Cuchulain's libidinous urge and he follows her off-stage to conquer her. In his absence, the miraculous water rises up momentarily, and then falls back to the bottom of the Well. Meanwhile, The Guardian of the Well has aroused to arms Aoife, the warrior-woman and her fierce troops and Cuchulain goes off to face them single-handed in battle.

The story of the play is mythopoeically conceived. The archetypal symbol of the Well at its centre is polyvalent and reflects the significance of super-nature. It is understood by Yeats as it was understood by "old writers, who thought that the generation of all things was through water; for when the water that gives a long and fortunate life, and that can be found by none but such a one as all women love, is found at last, the Dry Tree, the image of the ruined land, become green." By the side of the Well is a hazel-tree with boughs long-stripped by the wind. It symbolises the fate of those who passively wish to be blessed by super-nature. By its side on an "old

1. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, New York 1961 P.54
grey stone" (P.209) sits the Guardian of the Well who at first with "her heavy eyes" (P.209) is the feminine counterpart of the Old Man but later on with "her unmoistened eyes" (P.215) becomes the counterpart of the fierce and impassioned Cuchulain.

Thus Cuchulain and the Old Man have male and female aspects symbolised alternately by the Guardian of the Well. The theme of the play works itself out through this alternate symbolisation which makes of it "a unified image" having "a cadence of energy" released in such a way that "the fall of the cadence coincides with the end of the play."

The process of this release and fall has a vast background animated by the symbol of the quest actively and passively consummated by Cuchulain and the Old Man. In this consummation they become the antithetical principles of the same mind. The Old Man's inane self wants immortality in the form of deathlessness or longevity. Cuchulain wants it as transfiguration of his heredity from the hawk which is "a symbol of nobility, of loneliness ... or divine power, dangerous to mortals." It is this appropriation of ancestry from the hawk that involves him in the hawk-dance so that its movements bring out only what is already implicit in him. On account of it he goes alone to encounter Aoife with her wild female minions, oblivious of death as previously he had come to the Well, oblivious of the cause:

Never to win a woman's love and keep it,
Or to mix hatred in the love;

1. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, London 1971 P.1C3
2. Birgit Bjersby, The Interpretation of Cuchulain Legend in the Works of W.B. Yeats, Upsala 1950 PP.87-91
Or it may be that she will kill your children,
That you will find them, their throats torn and bloody,
Or you will be so maddened that you will kill them
With your own hand. (P.215)

All these factors are expressed reflectively by the Musicians through their half-choric utterances and concretely by the characters through their gestures and movements. For example, the first eight-lined stanza invokes the symbolical place: the Well, the withered tree, Cuchulain ascending the mountain-side, and Aoife looking enraged from her mysterious ivory face and "lofty dissolute air". (P.208) The second stanza reflects upon the motif that has brought Cuchulain to this mysterious place, in barrenness and aridity "akin to that of the waste land." After having dilated upon the significant aspects of the place, the Musicians delve deeper into the motif and in the form of a quatrain, articulate the apathy and inanity of the Old Man:

'O wind, O salt wind, O sea wind!'
Crys the heart it is time to sleep;
Why wonder and nothing to find?
Better grow old and sleep. (P.210)

A similar division into voices expressing themselves together, is also to be found in the last lyric. Here the expression is not only more general and universal but is also more indirect and ambiguous because it has now incorporated into itself wisdom born of the inevitability of failure. Thus the first stanza reflects upon the inevitability of failure. Thus the first stanza reflects upon the inevitability of failure.

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1. Balachandra Rajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965
passive and pathetic failure of the Old Man at the hands of "unfaltering, unmoistened eyes". (P.219) The persona of the second stanza is probably Cuchulain because by cherishing folly alone, it upholds a reckless heroic gesture. The last three stanzas forward a view of life that observes limits, and never seeks identity with super-nature. Instead of developing as antithesis of the main motif of the play, it lurks at the horizon and without establishing its own verity, adds to the non-chalance of the main motif.

Cuchulain and the Old Man are masked characters whose physical movements do not exceed the limits of symbolical gestures. As Denis Donoghue has observed, "All the movements of the play are non-mimetic. The dances, the drum-taps, the music of zither and gong, the movements of the Musicians, even the cries of the Hawk are ritual and symbolic gestures." Worked through passionate language and elemental imagery, they swirl with non-chalant intensity. Words such as 'stripped, withered, solitary, moistened, barbarous and bloody' weave the intertexture of the play giving it an aura of sanguine temperament and ancient sovereignty. Similarly, begotten of the elemental powers of the ocean and the wilderness, the images sway the play with oceanic intensity and iconic starkness. Such images as 'stupid as fish', 'wandering always like the wind', derive from the ocean and articulate the tempestuousness of the Young Man. Contrarily 'speckled skin, pallor of an ivory face, unmoistened eyes, doubled up with age,' are arid like wilderness itself, and recall the impotence of the Old Man.

1. Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice, Princeton 1959 P.52
The language and imagery of the play give full scope to the feelings of characters to reverberate with intensity. In no small measure, they are helped in it by the symbolical stage consisting only of "a folded black cloth (P.207) and "a gold pattern suggesting a hawk". (P.208) Letting dance and music exhaust their gestural and poetic possibilities, they give evidence of the structural inter-relation of characters with the weird background, and intra-structural inter-relation of characters amongst themselves. As a result of all these inter-relating factors, "the great achievement of At the Hawk's Well is a theatrical form in which multiplicity is brought to unity, scattered emotion to the unity of passion. If soliloquy could be conceived as dynamic, it would take such a form. Conflict is continuous, but it is derived from within as much as from without, from the creative joy with which the hero overcomes himself."

(iii)

The Only Jealousy of Emére is the antithesis of At the Hawk's Well. It explores the paradigm of nature vis-à-vis supernature from the perspective of supernature as against the previous play which has

1. Generally there prevails congruence between words and gestures in the body of At the Hawk's Well. The solitary example where Denis Donoghue does not find it is indicated by the following lines:

The accursed shadows have deluded me,
The stones are dark and yet the Well is empty;
The water flowed and emptied while I slept,
You have deluded me my whole life through,
Accursed dancer, you have stolen my life. (PP.217-218)

2. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, London 1971
explored it from the perspective of nature. Being the ideal image of nature, supemature is exclusively beautiful and erotic because it is free from the heterogeneous and discontinuous elements of nature. At the same time it is less substantial because it unifies human hopes and wishes without experiencing the reality which begets these hopes and wishes. But nature is both beautiful and substantial though its substantial aspect may not look beautiful and vice versa at the same time. Thus supemature always enchants the human mind though it is nature that always sustains him.

In *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, it is this paradigm of nature vis-a-vis supemature that is explored, and the exploration is made through the theme of love. This theme is very apposite for this exploration because its source is the female beauty the two aspects of which correspond with the playwright's view of supemature and nature. The first is the erotic aspect which is associated with woman "a chaotic urge to life" and envisions her as "My Lady Soul" or "that loveliness" raised into being "beyond hearing or seeing." (PP.291-292). The other is the sedentary aspect into the making of which have gone those "toils of measurement" which are beyond "the labyrinth of the mind". (P.282)

In the play this theme is developed through the love of three women for Cuchulain. Fand's love for Cuchulain is of an ideal female for man and is expressed like anima's projection simultaneously through love and despair and lure and doom. She lures Cuchulain to herself when

2. Ibid *Aion*, New York 1953 P.13
he lies exhausted after his fight with the waves as anima dominates man
when he is in the grip of inertia, mood or fantasy. Cuchulain is so
infatuated with her that he regards her as perfectly beautiful and
expresses the perfection of her beauty by circumgyrating his words around
the archetype of the moon. As he exclaims through the voice of his Ghost,
"Who is it stands before me there
Shedding such light from limb and hair
As when the moon, complete at last
With every labouring crescent past
And lonely with extreme delight,
Flings out upon the fifteenth night." (P.291)
Having lured him away from this world, Fand cannot sustain him
in the other trance-like world because she is essentially an ideal, an
abstraction while the power of sustenance is given only to women in flesh
and blood. So Cuchulain cannot kiss Fand in spite of her insistence.
Contrarily, he is claimed to this world apparently by Eithne Inguba's
sensual call, but essentially by Emer's self-effacing sacrifice.

But essentially Emer's love is self-effacing and she has been
constantly faithful to Cuchulain while he has been flagrantly unfaithful.
Thus she stands for the low-toned life of the household in which the
right of being reciprocated in love is driven to the background but
obligation to be devoted comes to the foreground. As against her, Eithne
Inguba is the sensual mistress of Cuchulain. Knowing sensuality to be
volatile, she is aware of the transitoriness lurking over her love:
He loves me best,
Being his newest love, but in the end
Will love the woman best who loved him first
And loved him through the years when love seemed lost. (P.285)

The love of Emer and Eithne Inguba is conjointly contraposed to that of Fand. From this contraposition develops the pattern of the play which has Cuchulain's inert body lying in trance at its centre as the magical well is there in At the Hawk's Well. There the vagina-like and depth-delving topography of the well unifies the multiple facets of the play into a masterful image and brings the scattered emotions of the characters in symbiosis. But here the body of Cuchulain, though masked, fails to acquire archetypal proportions. So awkwardness in the form of "the dramatic intransigence of action" characterises the play throughout, and it fails to imbibe the conventions of the NÓ in full measure. Instead of bringing into itself "all those feelings which are sustained by symbols — the spirits of the dead, the world of essence, dreams, archetypes" — it epitomises lyrical stasis and indirection not in keeping with the gestural momentum of the dance-drama.

Notwithstanding these defects, the play has a distinctive quality: "it is written in verse of a very great beauty, and has a larger portion of lyric to dramatic verse than most of these plays." The lyric portions of this verse pertain to the interchange between Fand and the Ghost of Cuchulain. "Set in a rhymed tetrameter", this

2. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, London 1971 P.104
inter-change is "carefully segregated from the rest of the play, not only by its metrics but by its remote, stylised, deliberately abstract quality." Hearkening to an extremely musical tone, it comes like a moment of musical crescendo with its passionate syntax of elemental words. Dilating upon beauty rather than upon memory, "beauty's bitterest enemy", (P.292) it is pervaded with the beauty of moon which transfigures love's tissues:

   Time shall seem to stay his course;
   when your mouth and my mouth meet
   All my round shall be complete
   Imagining all its circles run;
   And there shall be oblivion
   Even to quench Cuchulain's drouth
   Even to still that heart. (PP.292-293)

Contrasted to it are the inter-changes of Emer with Eithne Inguba and the Ghost of Cuchulain. Emer's passages are low-pitched in correspondence with her subdued life with Cuchulain. Her language is usually divested of imagery; if ever she makes use of an image, it refers to some past incident in the life of Cuchulain. 'Cattle in a log' and 'sea borne log' are the images which she uses, and directly or indirectly they refer to Cuchulain's fight against the ungovernable ocean. Correspondingly, when she is talked to by the Ghost of Cuchulain, it is either in the form of octosyllabic cries or short exclamations. They are fully in keeping with the nostalgia, that he feels for her when trying

1. Balachandra Rajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965 P.100
As compared to Emer's passages, those of Eithne Inguba are of high pitch with an eloquence which is different from rhetoric. It is because her relationship with Cuchulain is erotic, concentrated at the level of flesh only. This imparts sensuous concreteness to her expression. She makes use of images with erogenic aura about them — kisses, embraces, lips upon lips, etc. It is due to this sensual perception that she triumphantly claims to have won him back to this world:

Come to me, my beloved, it is I.
I, Eithne Inguba. Look! He is there.
He has come back and moved upon the bed.
And it is I that won him from the sea,
That brought him back to life. (P.294)

These inter-changes of Emer and Eithne Inguba with each other and with the Ghost of Cuchulain are in irregular blank verse which is "worn and conventional" at least in comparison with the "taut and splendid" verse of the Musicians. Their Songs do not comment approvingly or disapprovingly upon the theme of the play as songs mostly do in the plays of Bertolt Brecht. Rather, like Songs in the plays of Lorca, they are contextual and set the dramatic pattern in the framework of the universal values of love and hatred. The opening Song initiates "one of the central oppositions in the action — the conflict between the turbulent and bitter sea and fragile human beauty." The

last Song is extremely complicated and echoes voices of Emer and Fand addressing themselves and the audience. With all its complexity, it explicates the disturbed equilibrium that comes to prevail towards the end of the play. Thus these Songs form both the background and foreground of life that is woven into the pattern of *The Only Jealousy of Emer*.

( iv )

In *The Dreaming of the Bones* the matrix is concrete history at the conjuncture of nature and supernature. As Antonio Gramsci has affirmed, concrete history is "the identity of contraries in the concrete historical act, that is in human activity (history-spirit) in the concrete indissolubly connected with a certain organised (historicised) matter and with the transformed nature of man." In Yeats's gyral vision concrete and objective history is not a specific category of human existence. Evidently, he is averse to it. Instead, he is empathic to anti-history or interior history which transmutes historical facts "not through a desire to remake the world, but as the consequence of assuming a subjective or fully human point of view." After this transmutation, historical event acquires transhistorical justification in the conjunctural or paradigmatic union of nature and supernature. So long as historical event does not become transhistorical, it remains an impediment in the way of this union which, when consummated, awards

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transfiguration to nature and substance to supernature. However, through actors involved in them historical events ceaselessly strain towards transfiguration, making the ghosts of the involved actors live and re-live the intensest events of their lives. Describing the process of this purgatorial therapy, Yeats writes,

"One thinks of those apparitions haunting the places where they have lived ... Though only visible to the seer when Spirit and Passionate Body are joined, they are constantly repeated until, at last forgotten by the Spirit, they fade into The Thirteenth Cone. The more complete the Dreaming Back, the more complete the Return and more happy or fortunate the next incarnation. After each event of the Dreaming Back, the Spirit explores not merely the causes but the consequences of that event."

In The Dreaming of the Bones, it is this purgatorial therapy of a historical event that is worked out through the conjuncture of nature and supernature. This historical event has however an axial importance in the history of Ireland, i.e., coming in of the Normans who destroyed the traditional sanctity of Irish society. Crossing the historical expanse of centuries, it is joined to an historical event of the present, the Easter Rising, meant to drive out the foreigners to restore to Ireland her traditional sanctity. Thus joined together the two events denote the history of Ireland undergoing purgatorial therapy

for the salvation of those who have been its actors. Thus, the theme of the play has several strands woven into harmonic wholeness, i.e., the disincarnate life of the ghosts, their purgatorial sufferings, their plea to the living to intercede on their behalf, and the refusal of the living to do so because they believe that their misery is a direct consequence of the transgression committed by the dead. In this whole pattern, the bringing in of the Normans is the event of sinfulness which is an occasion for these purgatorial sufferings. Instead "The Easter Rising, one of those occasions which fans the sequel of continuous misery into a disastrous blaze, may be supposed to aggravate the torment of conscience" in which this history has lost itself.  

Thus "the genetic nucleus" of the play is both spiritual and political, the political providing a terrain of the spiritual and the spiritual finding it as a negative moment in the process of consummation. No wonder, the political is here similar to evil in Croce's system where it is "a negative or dialectical moment of the spirit, necessary for the correctness of the positive moment, for the reality of the spirit." That it is so, is evident from the fact that the Young Man, fled from the Easter Rising, remains in prominence as the lovers, Diarmuid and Dervogilla do, when "the memory of their crime", flowing up between, "drives them apart". (P.441)  

This prominence works itself out against a background of

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1. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963 P.95
complete darkness and loneliness. The topography of the place is a criss-cross of hills where nobody lives and where even the objects of nature reverberate to their own loneliness:

Birds cry, they cry their loneliness.

Even the sun-light can be lonely here,

Even hot noon is lonely. (P.434)

Into this wilderness the Young Man comes with a lantern, an object extremely inadequate to lead him out of the darkness of this wilderness. Even lantern is blown off by the Young Girl, but this does not add to the Young Man's discomfiture. He puts himself in charge of the ghosts, the Stranger and the Young Girl, who guide him beyond "the shallowwell and the flat-stone", "the ruined Abbey of Corcomroe", and "the ridge of Aughanish or Bialewelehan" (P.434). During this journey they tell him of the purgatorial sufferings of the ghosts and reveal themselves as Diarmuid and Dervogilla who, for the first time, wilfully brought foreigners into their native country. Condemned to wilful solitude where

"No shadow harried and consumed
Would change his own calamity for theirs," (P.441)

they feel that their misery can vanish if "somebody of their race" should say, "I have forgiven them". (P.442) Though "terrible the temptation and the place", The Young Man refuses to intercede on their behalf because he believes,

"Our country, if that crime were uncommitted
Had been most beautiful." (P.443)
Due to the inter-mixture of the political problematic with the spiritual against a lonely and dark background of concrete places, the play has immediacy and urgency much more than that shown by NOH plays such as Nishikigi, on the one hand and the episode of Tristan and Francesca, told by Dante in The Divine Comedy, on the other. In tune with their sufferings are the significant movements of the characters. The Young Man's movements are significant because he is a complete stranger to this inscrutable place where he has to tread each step with full care. The Stranger and the Young Girl, in their movements, adequately bring out their purgatorial sufferings which though full of momentum, do not seem to terminate anywhere. Such a situation of circular momentum can best be worked out through dance.

In their dance movements, the characters, especially The Stranger and the Young Girl, articulate their inner selves which all the time overflow with interior variety. The Stranger begins to articulate his fantastic conscience with a description of the surrounding wilderness. It is dramatically appropriate because being a male and conforming to Blake's assertion — "Time is a Man and Space is a Woman" — he finds it natural to be objective and extrovert even when he is extremely haunted by his sufferings. Tending more to outstress than instress, his language can fully evoke the milieu and ethos of the previous times. As the following passage proves he can cast a glance backward in time at the same time when he is looking around in space:

We're almost at the summit and can rest.

The road is a faint shadow there; and there

1. The Writings of William Blake (edited by Geoffrey Keynes), London 1925 P.159
The Abbey lies amid its broken tombs.
In the old days we should have heard a bell
Calling the monks before the day broke to pray;
And when the day had broken on the ridge,
The crowing of its cocks. (PP. 438-439)

When the situation demands he can also evoke the sufferings
of the dead almost in a Dantesque manner:

In a dream;
And some for an old scruple must hang spitted
Upon the swaying tops of the lofty trees;
Some are consumed in fire, some withered up
By hail and sleet out of the wintry North,
And some but live through their old lives again. (P. 436)

Complementary to the objective and impersonal tone of the
Stranger, is the tone of the Young Girl that is subjective and lyrical.
Evincing more of instress than outstress, she brings in the mention of
Donough O’ Brien and then shifts to the accursed state of the dead lovers
and the purgatorial sufferings which it entails. Through metaphorical
diction and circular rhythm, she makes the pining dead lovers re-live
their agonies as Tristan and Francesca do in the 5th Canto of The Divine
Comedy. The following lines spoken breathlessly bring out the terrible
pathos of these lovers’ predicament:

Those have no thought but love; nor any joy
But that upon the instant when their penance
Draws to its height, and when two hearts are wrung
Nearest to breaking, if hearts of shadows break,
As against the Stranger and the Young Girl, the Young Man speaks in a simple and direct way. He listens to the tale told by the ghosts about their pitiable predicament but does not anywhere feel pity or horror for them. Occupied with "flight, danger and hatred," he nowhere feels "compassion fainting" that Dante feels on hearing the miserable story of Tristan and Francesca. Though a moral flaw in the Young Man and a dramatic flaw in the play, it is basically a philosophical flaw in the world-vision of the playwright. A man of primary dispensation, the Young Man has to go along with history actively and excitedly. He is not thus meant to have the spiritual strength to transmute history into anti-history and imbibe its essence in a spirit of reverie and non-chalence. As Rajan has pointed out, the Young Man "has no basis for forgiveness". So "he faces no conflict and in the end makes no choice. He looks back into the past but his attitude to it is already decided. He is too much its victim to be able to redeem it."

This flaw not only makes the Young Man vacillate between latent sympathy and manifest hatred but also makes his articulation rationalised and unilinear. The unilinearity of his articulation is to some extent compensated by the Songs of the Musicians but this is not

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1. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963 P.96
2. Dante Alghiere, The Divine Comedy (translated by Henry Francis Cary), London 1929 P.18
sufficient compensation. For example, the First Musician speaks in two voices, his narrative utterances in blank verse showing him to be a neutral observer and the lyrical utterances echoing the feelings of the Young Man. In this respect, the First Musician is, to a very large extent, imitated by the other Musicians in lyrical utterances interspersed in the body of the play. Thus the Young Man and the Musicians have common images because they share similar feelings. The most prominent is the image of the cloud through the use of which by the Musicians, the Young Man begins latently to share "the attitude of the ghosts." Thereby the play is helped to mould the multiplicity of its problematic into an artistic unity.

Otherwise also, the play has an iterative image-pattern growing from the archetype of the hilly wilderness situated at the conjuncture of the play. This image-pattern is of contrapuntal nature: the images of the birds, the lantern, the old horse and the owl evoking the darkness of the night, and those of the sunlight, the cock and the hot sun heralding the coming of the day. Further it corresponds to the two episodes of the dramatic pattern, signifying the conjunction of the past and the present, the night and the day, the living and the dead. Because of this conjunction of the contraries, The Dreaming of the Bones is the best play written by Yeats upto the middle period of his creative career.

(v) In "seeking by violence to annihilate history," Yeats carries

2. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.272
further in *Purgatory* the theme of history's intervention in the conjuncture of nature and supernature. Because it is identical with human life, history cannot be annihilated. As of one moment, it can be superseded by that of another through human praxis determined by foresight which means "seeing the present and the past clearly as movement." In this case foresight is required to be historical and objective rather than arbitrary and gratuitous. It has to be aligned to a concrete project because only such alignment makes intuition more penetrating by sharpening it through passions.

As against foresight, Yeats relies upon hindsight capable of bringing into focus instinct which, though a primitive and historical acquisition, is no more than the traditional popular conception of the world. Intuiting events in simultaneity, before they have become concrete, instinct makes the problematic less complex, the past immediate rather than mediated, and the future anterior rather than probable. This concentrates flux, reflux and influx into one moment which, on account of this concentration, becomes apocalyptic. When illuminated, this moment generates a pattern unified in space rather than growing in time. As a result the theme and the form do not work out their implications historically and cannot communicate the complexity of their scope concretely. Instead, they articulate their essence only by suggesting their symbolical associations.

All this is evident in *Purgatory* in which the problematic of the annihilation of history is suggested through the inability of the

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living to intercede on behalf of the dead. The living fail to do so because they are a direct consequence of the transgression committed by the dead and are, as a result, more degenerate than them. There is also a suggestion of philosophical and political factors which may be grasped after a lot of decoding but which are not worked out through the creation of an affective world corresponding to their values.

The affective problematic of the play has its nodal point in the marriage of an aristocratic lady with a groom. This marriage did not take place according to the proper ritual and ceremony. Thus it does not reproduce "the hierogamy, more especially the union of heaven and earth" that mythology has associated with it. Similarly, it did not become a paradigm of the union of the human soul with the Divine Soul, the matrix of orthodox as well as heterodox religions. It also did not endeavour to impart to the feminine personality independence in relation to the male personality by creating for itself a new role in sexual relationship. To all intents and purposes, it was a carnal union through which the lady laid low her aristocratic ancestors,

"Magistrates, colonels, members of Parliament,
Captains and governors, and long ago
Men that had fought at Aughrim and the Boyne."(P.683)

(Print) P.23

As Mircea Eliade has explained, "Marriage rites too have a divine model ———". His point of view can be corroborated with a quotation from Brhadarayaka Upanishad volume VI page 20 where occurs the exclamation: dyaur ahum, prithvi tvam. Translated in English it reads:-

"I am Heaven", says the husband, "Thou art Earth."
To add injury to their insult, the groom was a parvenu interested in wasting money on "horses, drink and women". (P.683) Her own transgression and the debauchery of her husband filled the lady with remorse. As a result, she died in child-birth, and the groom was killed by the son, in this play the Old Man, born of their marital misalliance. Before his murder, the groom had "killed the house" by burning it down, little knowing that "to kill a house" is "a capital offence". (P.683) As a purgative therapy, the ghosts of the lady and the groom come to the ruined house to

"Relive
Their transgression and that not once
But many times." (P.682)

It is to such an enactment, a moment of apocalyptic proportions, that the Old Man has come after fifty years. This time he is accompanied by his son who is of the same age as he was when he had accompanied his own father, to the place where he killed him. After killing his father, he had thrown him into the burning ruins of the house. This moment is very ripe for recurrence because being completely alienated from the aristocratic elan of the lady and the upstartish philistinism of the groom, the Old Man is in an oedipal situation. With pitiful reverence for his mother and haunting hatred for his father, the Old Man is a spiritual beggar — "the great Platonic symbol of man dressed in the muddy vesture of decay, lost in the wilderness of the world." Too much reflection upon the transgression of one and the vulgarity of the other,

1. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition, London 1961 P.159
makes his mind a contradictory microcosm riven with interior variety, which above the pattern of the play, maintaining "the basic qualities of its archetypal story," is intended to articulate.

Though riven from inside, this articulation is rammed into unity from the outside by the Great House, a miniature of traditional and aristocratic living. Before the transgression of the lady, the House was pervaded with grace, scholarship, ceremoniousness, sanctity, dignity and generosity — all essential aspects of the aristocratic elan — enhanced metaphorically by the blossoming of the tree with "green leaves, ripe leaves, leaves thick as butter". (P.682) Making full use of his memory, the Old Man hints at every grace of the House, its library, its aristocratic personages, their deep love for it and their ritualistic observance of visiting it in spring.

While evoking these qualities, the Old Man is nostalgically lost in its traditional sanctity on the basis of which he constructs it as a miniature of traditional and aristocratic living. He stands almost still but his stillness does not make the scene static in any way. In fact, it has enough of mobility imparted to it by the description of its proceeding from the hall-door to the interior of the House and coming back again to its floors, lawns and windows. In addition, there is the Boy to whom this description sounds no better than abracadabra. He moves hither and thither as if nothing is happening. Taking his movements as further outrage to the House, the Old Man, straining his nerves to the utmost, calls him to

"Stop! Sit there upon that stone" (P.682)

When the Old Man starts describing the destruction of the House, his demeanour becomes horror-stricken. Metaphorically, the blossoming tree withers away, ostensibly because a thunder-stroke has struck it but essentially because it symbolises the fate of the House. This description is accompanied by appropriate action taking place both outside and inside the House. Outside hoof-beats of a galloping horse, "the symbol of the powerful and the irrational" are heard, giving the impression at the dramatic level that the groom "is riding from the public house A whisky bottle under his arm." (P.685)

At the poetic level, however, the descriptions project "a hallucinatory image of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence," leading to a tension that greatly strains the nerves of the spectators. Inside the House a window, with a young girl in it, is alternately lit bright and dim, giving the heart-rending impression that the groom goes into the marriage-chamber, copulates with the lady and brings dishonour to the House. This impression, with the irrevocability of what it conveys, is enough to lead to the concluding violent physical action, i.e., the stabbing of the Boy, the cleaning of the knife and the picking up of the money, etc.

The murder of the Boy is meant to salvage the lady from the painful re-living of her transgression. However, it proves to be a

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self-defeating move because "the labyrinth in which man lives is self-created; yet, precisely for that reason the effort to escape from it only entangles him more deeply in its complexity." Failing to free his mother's soul from the repetition of her wedding night, the Old Man ends on a note of utter dejection:

Twice a murderer and all for nothing
As she must animate that dead night
Not once but many times! (P.689)

The only thing that the Old Man can do now is to pray to God to alleviate "the misery of the living and the remorse of the dead". (P.689) Failing to reverse the flow of history through violence, the Old Man calls upon God to do so through forgiveness. The option exercised is human though brutal and that prayed for is transhuman though kind. Both fail to annihilate history, the first because it takes no stock of the creative faculties of mankind and the second because it depends upon trans-humanity or its idealised consciousness.

Totality and unity are forthcoming from the Old Man's articulation because the passionate and lyrical beauty of its intonation is not "in the line or in the solvable passage but woven into the dramatic texture itself." This texture grows from the hallucination of the Old Man realised through narration and description. In the Old Man, memory is one with remembrance as looking is one with gazing. What he remembers is disorganised by what he sees which, as Roland Barthes would like to

1. Balachandra Rajan, Yeats, London 1965
observe, is enough "to maintain him in the being of his nullity." As a result he evokes the general condition of humanity through the narration/description of the general contours of the marital misalliance of the lady and the groom.

This is the symbolical technique at its acme. Its "spare and bitter verse" of irregular four-stressed lines, tends to create the impression of unity rather than of distinction, development and differentiation of meaning. So where possible, nouns, phrases and clauses take the place of sentences. Otherwise also, the sentences are united to one another through symbolical association rather than through reflection, abstraction, development and contradiction.

Corresponding to the unifying tendency of words is the interfusing power of the characters and the symbols. For example, the House objectifies in its ruin the degeneration of the Old Man. He cannot inherit the qualities of the aristocratic elan as the House does not contain its traditional sanctity. He is also "a dramatic projection of that part of the lady which detests her drunken husband." In the same way the Boy may be taken to stand for that part of the Old Man which is held in abomination by him. This abomination compels him to use animal-images. He soliloquises in words of seeming irrelevance but of great dramatic relevance. He calls his father "a tired beast" and

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speaks words remarkable for their reason-in-madness:

Hush-a-bye baby, thy father's a knight,
Thy mother a lady, lovely and bright,
No, that is something that I read in a book,
And if I sing it must be to my mother,
And I lack rhyme. (P.688)

As the characters intermingle, so do symbols taken from the folklore. The blossoming and the withering of the tree stand, respectively, for the prosperity and adversity of the House. It is alternately illuminated by light and shadowed by darkness. In the beginning it is in the shadow of the cloud and at the end it is dark again though the lady is in the light. In between, the window is lit when the lady appears there and all becomes dark when she copulates with her husband.

As Wilson has observed, "All the symbolic properties of the play are as simple and as naturally introduced, and this economy of means Yeats learned from his models, for it is typically Japanese." On the basis of this economy, the play may be acclaimed as the best Yeatsean surrogate of the NoH and "a small masterpiece," indeed.

(vi)

In Calvary and Resurrection Yeats tries to work out the ontology of history. In his gyral system, history is a dimension of the universe as man is a dimension of history. It is not man who creates

history, instead it is history which creates man. Being thus the creator of man, history is not identical with life which, therefore, cannot reflect its ontology. If anything can reflect it, it is the apocalyptic incident which is partly natural and partly supernatural in the zodiac-like and magical historiography of Vico, Spengler and Yeats. In the dialectical and concrete historiography such an incident is a "rupture" caused by "the overdetermination of contradictions."

When a rupture is worked out in all its concreteness, it articulates philosophy that is historical and works out history that is philosophical. As against it an apocalyptic incident reflects philosophy that is eternal and has no relevance with history. In Calvary the crucifixion of Christ is used in such a way as to show that the ontology of history has its matrix the transition of antithetical civilisation into the primary civilisation. With the advent of this transition human beings with primary dispensation are moulded to its rationale, but those with antithetical dispensation become isolated from it.

For the working out of this ontology, "utter subjectivity and utter objectivity" are envisioned as "the two poles of human nature and universal history." These two poles are inter-related by the crucifixion of Christ, an apocalyptic incident, which Christ is dreaming back at this point.

1. Luis Althusser, For Marx (translated by Ben Brewster), Middlesex 1969 P.101

Althusser believes that all contradictions fuse into a rupture. So rupture is a world/historical event as the apocalypse is universal/eternal. Thus it is concretely what an apocalyptic incident is thought to be metaphysically.

particular moment. Since this incident is made alive by Christ, he is
the central dramatic character around whom are set two antithetical and
two primary characters, i.e., the birds and the Roman soldiers, on the
one hand, and Lazarus and Judas, on the other. These characters have a
spatial setting divested of all temporal implications. In fact,
temporal implications cannot penetrate this setting because the incident
that animates them is not conceived as a rupture. Instead, it is
envisioned as apocalyptic which is "an image of wholeness transcending
the fragmented temporal world." Evidently, these characters do not
acquire the plasticity of human beings in the absence of which their
utterances do explicate their points of view, but without encompassing
the interior variety of complex dramatic articulation.

All the characters set around Christ have symbolical importance.
The birds symbolise subjective living: "certain birds ... such lonely
birds as the heron, hawk, eagle and swan, are the natural symbols of
subjectivity, especially when floating upon the wind alone or alighting
upon some pool or river." In the beginning of the play, it is the
heron which is the sole symbol of this intense subjectivity, which has
a tragic grandeur about itself. Though shivering "in a dumbfounded dream",
the white heron

"---- 'll not dare
Dip or do anything but stare

1. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.54
2. W.B. Yeats, Four Plays for Dancers, London 1921 PP.135-137
Upon the glittering image of a heron
That now is lost and now is there." (PP. 449-450)

However its subjectivity changes into narcissism as its isolation endures and then it seems certain that

"--- the moon-crazed heron
Would be but fish's diet soon." (P.450)

The heron is the metaphorical basis upon which The First Song is structured by the Musicians. Shivering in a dumb-dream and staring at its own glittering image, it presents the first variation of the play. Through the thrice-recurring line

"God has not died for the white heron," (P.449)
it expresses that subjectivity which is beyond the objective sympathy of Christ.

The antipode of the first variation is the last, that is, the fourth variation which consists of Christ's encounter with the Roman soldiers. They are the depraved surrogates of the birds and exist outside the range of Christ's power to salvage them. As evidence of this, their ruminations have self-sufficiency denied to the objective sympathy of Christ, the self-absorbed solitude of Lazarus and the defiant self-destruction of Judas. Oblivious of Christ upon the Cross but intent on getting his robe, they begin "the dance of the dice-throwers", (P.455) and recreate the analogous Great Wheel.

In the dance

We quarrel for a while, but settle it
By throwing dice, and after that being friends,
Join hand to hand and wheel about the cross. (P.456)
No wonder their depraved subjectivity makes Christ sceptic of everything and it is after his encounter with them that he raises his cry of total bewilderment:

My father, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (P.456)

In between the first and the last variation, are two contrary variations in which Christ meets Lazarus and Judas who stand for those forms of intellectual despair which are beyond the objective sympathy of Christ. In the first of these Christ is shown climbing to the Calvary with "the cross that but exists because he dreams it". (P.450) In Christian terms, he recreates what recurrently happens in the NoH in Buddhist terms. Though illusory, this feeling shortens his breath and wears away his strength. Mocked at by the mob, he goes ahead and is then accosted by Lazarus who has recently been resurrected. Though of primary dispensation, he protests to Christ that his solitude has been taken away from him. Finding his resurrection of no value, he compares his resurrected self to a rabbit dragged out by the boys "when they have dug his hole away". (P.452) Paradoxically, he finds Christ travelling towards his own death. Feeling it to be an outrage perpetrated upon him, he claims from him his own death. Solemnly outraged, he puts his claim rather emphatically:

And now with all the shouting at your heels
You travel towards the death I am denied.
And that is why I have hurried to this road
And claimed your death. (P.452)

This claim is as infructuous as it is preposterous because Christ, himself, is not the master of destiny. "I do my Father's Will", 
(P.452) is the only reply that he is able to give to the outraged Lazarus. Christ's reply leaves Lazarus extremely disconsolate and he feels that he is for ever doomed to the collective life of the Christian community. This doom is lyrically expressed by the First Musician when, by implication, he sings of the three Marys as women of primary dispensation:

Take but His love away,
Their love becomes a feather
Of eagle, swan or gull,
Or a drowned heron's feather
Tossed hither and thither
Upon the bitter spray
And the moon at the full. (P.453)

After this Christ meets Judas whose mask is "self-realisation" and who is deformed like the hunchback. Judas's greatest temptation is "to defy God ... not for thirty pieces of silver but that he may call himself creator." Under the power of this temptation, he feels that if a man betrays a God, he is the stronger of the two. So he betrays Christ apparently for thirty pieces of silver but essentially for self-assertion:

I could not bear to think you had but to whistle
And I must do, but after that I thought
Whatever man betrays Him will be free,
And life grow bearable again. (P.454)

This assertion is, however, illusory because Christ's betrayal is predetermined, "decreed that hour" when the foundations of the world were laid. (P.454) So Judas, though subordinate to primary dispensation, anticipates the advent of the antithetical civilisation in the course of time. In this way there prevails a type of elective affinity between Judas and the heron.

The closing Song sums up the resolution envisaged by the playwright between objectivity and subjectivity. Here the singular heron changes into the plural birds denoting that the playwright tends to transcend the antithesis of self-absorbed subjectivity with world-absorbed objectivity. Now he prognosticates a pattern of life in which subjectivity may be as meaningful as objectivity. As is shown by the tonal contrast between the following contiguous stanzas, this prognostication seems to be lurking at the distant horizons only:

The ger-eagle has chosen his part
In blue deep of the upper air
Where one-eyed day can meet his stare
He is content with his savage heart.

But where have last year's cygnets gone?
The lake is empty; why do they fling
White wing out beside white wing?
What can a swan need but a swan? (P.457)

Though juxtaposed together, these variations fail to develop a profound inter-relationship. Consequently, the play has no significant structural core or dramatic action. Liable "to break down into arbitrary
and inconsequential incidents", it is held together by Christ's
dreaming back of his crucifixion and the Songs sung by the Musicians. 1
"Impersonal, remote and symbolical", these Songs are antithetical in
tone to realistically spoken speeches of Lazarus and Judas and the
majestic and oracular utterances of Christ.

Because of the spatial setting of the dramatic variations, the
play under consideration is extremely static. Lacking the third
dimension, its characters are also static; Christ is a Byzantine
pantokrat and Lazarus and Judas are emblems of singular human attitudes.
In itself, the dramatic pattern is a vast emblem and is thus closely
related to Mantegna's 'Agony in the Garden' which aims at "an
illusionistic effect of depth based on linear perspective." Seeking
to convey the same effect, the play becomes exotic in spite of its
religious and philosophic significance.

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In Calvary ideas are presented "as movement round a medial
stillness, as vortices of the intellectually active death-hungry or
dancing selfhoods arranged about the god." As against it, in The
Resurrection "there is much more development of the dialectical type".
The characters seek confirmation of their ideas in events and the events
occur dynamically. Not limited to "interlocking contrasts", they beget
a dramatic pattern comprising "exposition, conflict leading to mounting
tension, and exploding into a catastrophe." 3

1. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963 P.117
2. Erwin O Christensen, The History of Western Art, New York 1959 P.218
3. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963 P.120
This is so because the crucifixion is symbolic of the burial and resurrection of the re-awakening faculties of man. While burial subdues the active side of man and makes him theoretic and reflective, resurrection releases the potential to act and submerges the theoretic and the reflective elements into itself. This process takes place through an unpremediated shock that confirms the acceptance "of the apocalyptic resolution of opposites — man and woman, love and death, body and spirit, human and divine — the completeness attainable only beyond purification by tragedy, in the element of light and dark fire." This shock is the complete contrary of the mediated shock which has created "interstices between image and idea, word and thing" and has dissipated experience by no longer leaving it "a matter of tradition, in the collective existence as well as private life." The difference between the two shocks lies precisely in the fact that the unpremediated shock is sustained by a mystery and the mediated by concrete social and historical living. The first makes clear what has so far remained amorphous, the second altogether changes the condition of human living. In other words, the first perfects the already existing modality of life and perception, while the second brings about a change in the nature of this modality.

In The Resurrection premediated shock is sustained by three ardent followers of Christ, i.e., the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Syrian. The nationalities of the followers of Christ are not chosen ingeniously if

1. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.113
2. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, London 1970 PP.166, 159
they are meant to throw light upon the three aspects of Christianity towards its founder. Instead of being a confirmed believer of The Old Testament, the Hebrew is "a sentimental rationalist, whose view of Christ, though personally courageous, is wholly naturalistic, even reductive." Similarly, the Greek does not embody reason rigorously; he is a humanist to whom everything supernatural seems phantom-like only. The Syrian is convincingly gnostic but instead of having been named so, he should have been named the Babylonian as the playwright had thought to do in the beginning.

These three followers are not wholly on the terrain of cultures they are expected to embody. They reveal themselves best not by what they say before Christ's Resurrection, but by their response to it when it occurs. For example, while guarding against anti-Christians the room in which eleven apostles are holding a meeting, the Hebrew and the Greek present their points of view lucidly in a measured tone. The Hebrew holds Him to be "nothing more than a man, the best man who ever lived" (P.583). He is glad that He is not a Messiah because had he been one, He would have made everybody renounce everything for possessing him completely:

One had to give up all worldly knowledge, all ambition, do nothing of one's own will. Only the divine could have any reality. God had to take complete possession. (P.585)

Similarly the Greek regards Christ's life as an illusion and

1. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972 P.337
the crucifixion as an insubstantial shadow-play. He holds the corporeal birth of a god to be "the most terrible blasphemy" and he has sent "the Syrian to the tomb to prove that there is nothing there". (P.584)

On his return, the Syrian announces that Christ is "no phantom" and His carporeality seems to signify that "another Argo seeks another fleece, another Troy is sacked". (P.590) To prove the Syrian's observation to be true, Christ, Himself, appears amidst them all with His heart actually beating and with a great wound in His side. This incident, of course, has apocalyptic proportions because in it "the supernatural being (Christ) reveals his true form and brings as in NoH, spiritual enlightenment." Driving the Hebrew to bewildered silence, it leads the Greek to reflect like Heraclitus: "God and man die each other's life, live each other's death". (P.594)

The double attitude of the characters towards the symbol of incarnation brings into focus "the paradoxes of a world in which every act is also a suffering, every creation a discovery, every death a rebirth." However, they are not articulated poetically because the shock that occasions them is unpremeditated. It does not suffuse them with the cultural ethos upon which they seem to be germinating and growing. There are two other factors in the play which actually develop from a shock of the mediated nature. The first is the orgiastic frenzy of the Dionysian crowd leading them to howling, drumming, copulating in the street and seeking "forgetfulness in monstrous ceremonies". (P.584)

2. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.107
Signifying the sway of the Asiatic or centrifugal bestiality over the European or the centripetal spirituality, they are dancing, gashing themselves with knives and imagining themselves simultaneously the gods and the Titans. Their howls and cries are collective and as such are completely without the elaboration and sensitiveness of the articulations of the individual minds. So their orgiastic frenzy is actuated by music and dance or poetry of the theatre which may impart impetus to poetry in the theatre but which can in no way be identified with it. Thus the Dionysian frenzy of the crowd does animate the play but without providing poetic potential to it in a significant way. Even the Song that is sung by one of the Musicians has to sacrifice the third dimension of its words at the altar of the singular dimension of the outbursts of music indulged in by the crowd.

Only the two Songs, one in the beginning and the other in the end, impart to the play poetic potential of any significance. The first stanza of the opening Song rends the veil of death and rebirth immanent in time by foretelling the most intense moment of the play. This is done through the singing of "holy Dionysus" whose "beating heart" is carried away by "the staring Virgin" (PP. 579, 580) who combines into herself the qualities of Athene, Demeter and Hera. According to Thomas R. Whitaker this triad of the three goddesses unified into the body of one unnamed virgin has an echo of Blake's myth of mistress-mother-murderess. Notwithstanding the echo, there is a vital difference between Yeats's and Blake's female beings of three aspects. While Blake's female being is the agent as well as the actor involved in the consequences of the act, that of Yeats is only the agent un-involved in what may result from
her act that reassures rebirth. No wonder the second stanza moves from "empathic participation to release in a distanced vision — a shift characteristic of Yeats's double perspective on history."  

Because of this release, the vision of the playwright seeks an astrological analogue in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue and Shelley's variation upon it. Virgil foretells the return of Astraea and her Age of Gold. Assimilated coherently into the Christian tradition, it is a pre-Christian prophecy of Christ's advent and the accompanying millenium. Shelley's variation 2 works this prophecy into the horrifying and limitless vista of endless cycles, of cycles beyond cycles. Yeats's synthesis of the two first lets the visionary gaze, lurk into this vista of astrological proportions and then brings it to the immediate sacral drama, with Christ as the reborn Dionysus and the maternal/destructive potentialities of the virgin now dominant in all their ferocity:

The Roman Empire stood appalled:
It dropped the reigns of peace and war
When the fierce virgin and her Star
Out of the fabulous darkness called. (P.580)

The word 'appalled' connotes the ambiguity given to it by 

1. Thomas F. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.104
2. According to Jeffares (W.B.Yeats P.270) the source of the second Song are both Virgil and Shelley. E.M.Tillyard emphasises the Shelleyan aspect of it when he observes (Poetry Direct and Oblique, London 1948, P.74) that "it is only when Yeats's fierce irony is set against the background of Shelley's most serene and passionate idealism that it gets its full force."
Blake in his poem 'London' where "the Chimney-sweepers' cry/Every black'ning Church appalls." However, there is much more than this consonance between the two uses of the word because economic and social connotations imparted to it by Blake are not forthcoming from Yeats's use of it. In Yeats's use it has only metaphysical connotation making the vision of the playwright shift spatially from divine dilation in the opening Song to human dilation in the closing Song. Its first stanza depicts Christ's crucifixion unleashing centrifugal forces over the centripetal ones in such a way that tolerance and discipline nurtured in the previous antithetical culture become irrelevant with reference to the human condition in the new primary culture. Thus this apocalyptic incident starts a purely human process of reversal which, if envisioned as impersonal, is liable to end on a note of lamenting exhaustion. However, it does not end so because

"Whatever flames upon the night
Man's own resinous heart has fed. (P.594)

The "resinous heart" of this Song and "the beating heart" of the first Song are related to each other as object is related to the image. So the stress upon human creativity inherent in the first is not, as Ellmann has alleged, "slightly out of key with the insistence of the two songs on divine miracle." This is because there is "a clear if

1. The Portable Blake, arranged by Alfred Kazin, New York 1946 P.112
2. Yeats observes absolute parity between the antithetical and primary cultures. Wilson is right in holding this view in Yeats's Iconography (PP.167-168) but he is mistaken when (PP.185,191) he declares that Yeats sees Christ's rule "as something essentially sordid."
elliptical progression from the initial sacred drama, through the divine human interaction, to the final human drama."

Lyrically condensed into Songs, this clear but elliptical progression is worked out dramatically in the body of the play as a flame may work out its reflection in a mirror. So the Songs reflect upon the play rather overwhelmingly but the play provides only incidents in confirmation of the vision of the Songs. The Songs are written in a language of stark and savage cadence in which the diaspora of mythical references like the "Galilean turbulence" and "the Babylonian starlight" (P.594) suggests vast spaces of macrocosmic proportions. As against it, the main body of the play is in prose the breathless rhythm of which keeps pace with the savagery as well as the harmony inherent in the vision of the playwright. So the play ends up as a poetic play in prose with Songs of overwhelming poetic potential framing it and imparting visionary resplendence to it.

(viii)

After having dealt with history as a matrix of nature and supernature and after having determined its gyral ontology, Yeats turns to time to make explorations into its nature as well as ontology. As history can become this matrix by becoming interior history, similarly time can attain this position only by letting its structure become a base for the superstructure of eternity. When this has happened "The Ruins of Time build Mansions in Eternity" or "time's ruins build

1. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.107
eternity's mansions." At this stage time divests itself of its concrete aspect and becomes a *lapis* which is "both life and death, both Incarnation and Transfiguration" and which incarnates movement from "cycle to immanent apocalypse" in such a way that "cycle merges with apocalypse" in its transfiguring creation.

In *The King of the Great Clock Tower* the playwright tries to show how time divests itself of its concrete aspect. For this purpose he makes dramatic action an accessory of the multivalent enactment through romantic agony of "the old ritual of the year: the mother-goddess and the slain god." The enactment of the ritual is consummated by the Queen and the Stroller who are imparted tropological and analogical proportions. Incarnating *Anima* and *Animus* or the Female and the Male Principles, respectively, the Queen and the Stroller are interlocked in a "perfectly archetypal situation" in which the Stroller symbolises spirit in its fallen condition, after the descent into matter, but spirit which is nevertheless in love with and beloved by the Mother of the Gods (Yeats's Queen). That is to say, on the human or microcosmic level, the Stroller symbolises man in the physical world, who is nevertheless in love with the idea of Heaven." In addition to this, they are accessible to the metaphorical interpretations of Helen Vendler and Frank Kermode in which they are the poet and his muse or the artist and

the romantic image. Though "less rarefied" than Wilson's interpretations, these are as valid because the poet and his muse or the artist and the romantic image are as inseparably, agonisingly and ecstatically related as the Stroller and the Queen or the Male and the Female Principles.

Because of these archetypal proportions, the Queen and the Stroller become fabulous creatures from mythology. The Queen contains in herself the latent murderousness of Cybele and the tenderness of Minerva. The Stroller is partly Dionysus and partly Attis. Associated with the mythical core is the dancing motif of the Queen and the singing motif of the Stroller. They seem to have been suggested by Salome's dance before John the Baptist because "Salome is the Dancer in the special role of the Image that costs the artist personal happiness, indeed of life itself." Much more than that their suggestion seems to come from the story of the minstrel Aoedh who, though beheaded in battle, continued his song in praise of Queen Lectira until "a troop of crows, heavy like fragments of that sleep older than the world, swept out of the darkness, and as they smote those ecstatic lips with the points of their wings; and the head fell from the bush and rolled at the feet of the Queen."

Because of these mythical, half-mythical and historical associations, the Queen and the Stroller give evidence of being female and male microcosms of the traditional sort echoing the ancient wisdom of primordial times. As against them, the King has an appurtenance of reality symbolising time by reference to the Queen's family-background,

1. Balachandra Rajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965
irritation at her continued silence and exasperation at her alleged insult by the Stroller. Extrinsically like Zeus and Herod, he gives no intrinsic clue of being a microcosm of different categories. Instead he is "the unimaginative, everyday intelligence, baffled by forces which it cannot comprehend but which it is nevertheless forced to recognise as valid." So without understanding who the Queen was, how she walked into his house unannounced, he "kneels, laying the sword at her feet" and announces his exit from there:

What is prophesied? What marvel is
Where the dead and living kiss?
What of hands on the Great Clock face?
Sacred Virgil never sang
All the marvels there begun,
But there is a stone upon my tongue
A moment more and it tolls midnight. (P.640)

Unlike the King, the Stroller experiences no awkwardness or incongruity in his union with the Queen. Their union takes place through dance which is not dramatic action in the action-character sense of the word. Being like the gathering together of circles beyond circles at one lapis, it unites "the rambling shambling travelling man" (P.640) with her whom he has never seen but whom he regards as the most beautiful woman as "the fallen God" would regard "the principle from which he emanated, but from which he has been divorced since his incarnation." Ostensibly, this dance seems to develop from the delicate and sensitive movements of

1. Balachandra Rajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965 P.159
2. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition, London 1961 P.76
the eyes, arms, hands and other limbs of the body from the soft stamping of the feet which is aimed at "complete becoming one with nature herself" so that her forces have to direct themselves according to the dancer's wishes.

This dance consummates itself in a very rhythmical way. In the beginning the Queen, wearing "a beautiful impassive mask" (P.633) is shown observing absolute silence and stillness. Denoting the dance to be a frozen one at this stage, she sits like a statue in spite of the fact that she is reprimanded by the King in no uncertain terms. Then comes the Stroller with "a wild half-savage mask" (P.633) to whom Aengus has told,

"On stroke of midnight when the old year dies,  
Upon that stroke, the tolling of that bell,  
The Queen shall kiss your mouth." (P.637)

His erotomaniac attitude towards the Queen — "Your Queen, my mouth, the Queen shall kiss my mouth" (P.637) — enrages the King and he orders his Attendants to behead the Stroller. This beheading is very essential for the fructification of their union because it removes at one stroke all the outer and inner hindrances which the temporal factors of life may have put in their way. His severed head is placed upon the throne, and the Queen lifts it to carry upon her shoulder. Then she begins to dance, singing of the martyred but ecstatic joys of sexual union. At this her dance gains in momentum and she kisses the beheaded head at the stroke of midnight showing thereby that perfect union demands perfect sacrifice possible in the domain where time is transfigured by

1. Rosemarie Nave-Herz, 'The Form of the Dance and that of a Society'
Universitas No.2, 1971 P.163
eternity.

Worked out through dance, this union is articulated through an intertexture having dramatic as well as lyrical aspects. For lack of dramatic action in the sense of action-character, the dramatic aspect is subordinate to the lyrical aspect. Eliciting less interest from the playwright, the blank verse of the dramatic aspect is slack, in contrast to the tautness of the lyrics sung by the Musicians, the Attendants and the personae of the Queen and the Stroller.

Sung by the First Attendant with interchanges from the second, the first lyric evokes the ideal atmosphere of "Timan-oge", (P.633) the country of the Youth that is free from the limiting and constricting impact of Time. Though not fully integrated into the narrative that follows, it conveys the picture of the timeless world of love through such images of the supercountry as the birds, the hound, the hornless deer, the apple and the foam. Through a hint rather than a comment, it sets the tone of the play for a world untouched by time to be found out not in space as a country of the Youth but within as a world of the timeless and eternal tendencies of human selves.

Though sung by the Second Attendant, the second lyric has intrinsically the Queen as its persona. It is sung when the Stroller is beheaded and the King wants the Queen to "laugh, dance or sing" (P.638) to insult the rambling rogue who has exasperated him. The Queen feels otherwise and the Stroller's claim of sex and death, and destruction and gestation transports her into a state of aphrodisiac tension:

0, what may come
Into my womb?
He longs to kill
My body, until
The sudden shudder
And limbs lie still

O' what may come
Into my womb,
What caterpillar
My beauty consume? (P.638)

Sung by the First Attendant, the third lyric has the severed head of the Stroller as its persona. Since the severed head has been resurrected, it celebrates the perfection of love after death. Such love seems to be the conflagration of the whole being as Swedenborg finds it to be in the intercourse of angels. Looking an incandescence from far off, it incarnates the nuptial bed which is more passionate than a young boy's desire at puberty or a Sibyl's desire for possession by God. Nevertheless, this union is viable in timelessness or eternity conveyed through the recurrent symbol of the bell which rings at midnight in the Great Clock Tower. It is viable in heaven because "time stands still and it is perpetual midnight; lovers never tire, for they remain always in the first joy of their resurrection into the spiritual world." "The alternative song for the severed head", in spite of its supererogatory stance, recounts "those tragic characters" (P.641) who as Niam, Aleel and Hanrahn are mortal inhabitants of this timeless world.

1. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition, London 1961
The final lyric symbolically gives the essence of the metaphysical problematic of the play by positing the universal desire of man for transfiguration and beatitude against his obdurate belief in his material indestructibility and disinclination to face the verity of death. Thus this lyric has a contrapuntal pattern in which the eternity of transfigured beings is asserted by "the rambling, shambling, travelling man" and the mortality of living beings by "the wicked, crooked hawthorn tree". (P.640) Their whole interchange centres upon the lit house which symbolises the mansion of heaven or the abode of permanence and eternity. Ultimately, "the wicked, crooked hawthorn tree" concedes the point to some extent to "the rambling, shambling, travelling man" and the play ends upon the note that "one lives with occasional glimpses of reality" synchronising with eternity: "Those who seek the fuller wisdom must pay the sterner price." This is evident from the stage direction that immediately precedes it, i.e., "the Queen has come down stage and now stands framed in the half-closed curtains". (P.641)

Though congruent, this is not a consummate ending because the conflicting motifs of time and eternity are placed here in collation only. Instead of annihilating itself completely into eternity, time either drives itself out or tries to temporalise eternity. This creates uneasiness between these motifs, between the archetypal and historical denominations of characters and their inter-relationships. Divided but complex in vision, the play has a divided but complex form which becomes unified and simple in its analogue A Full Moon in March.

In *A Full Moon in March* Yeats resorts to what may be called simplification through intensity. As against *The King of the Great Clock Tower* that deals with "the hunger of time for eternity" it takes up the theme of "the completion of eternity in time." While the matrix of the former is time, that of the latter is eternity. Time corresponds with *chronos* and eternity with *kairos* where *Chronos* is "passing time or waiting time" denoting continuity and change, and *kairos* is "a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end." In other words, time comprises moments "ad infinitum" and eternity a moment "ab origine." Accordingly, in *The King of the Great Clock Tower* a concrete moment tends to acquire mythical proportions while in *A Full Moon in March* an archetypal moment so consummates itself in an atemporal mythical instant that it becomes one with the cosmogonic union of heaven and earth. The only difference that arises is that whereas in the cosmogonic myth, heaven is male and earth female, here it is the other way round. This inversion makes the mythical and the visionary moments of the play concur with each other completely, as earth, the male, symbolising time, with heaven, the female, symbolising eternity. It is due to this concurrence that the mythical instant of the play renders "in a dramatic, choreographic and musical form of the

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most direct kind — not a philosophical idea but a spiritual experience — a life-long creative death.

The mythical instant of the play consummates itself in "a vacuum, uninfluenced by time and the rational world." In other words, historical time does not intrude into it, if at all any time pervades, it is the cosmic time in which "the beginning of the mystical year comes at the vernal equinox, the time of the full moon in March when winter is about to turn to spring, Genesis about to take place, and all things are about to be renewed" through death, union and resurrection. For working all this out the characters are not only quantitatively reduced, they are qualitatively pruned of all the inessentials. Thus the play has now only The Queen and The Swineherd as its main characters, i.e., The King, being inessential to the mythical and visionary moments of the play, is no longer in it. The two Attendants are no longer male characters as they were in the previous play but "an elderly woman and young man" (P.621). Becoming now the singers of the songs of the Queen and the Swineherd, they indicate the limitless anima and the animus of which they are the human simul____ without individuality and character.

Thus the Queen is not merely the composite of Dectira, Orchil, Venus and Astarte and the Swineherd of Dionysus, Aoedh and John, the Baptist. They are archetypes of primordial essences. The Queen is simultaneously "the winter of virginity" (P.624) or anima and "the virgin cruelty" (P.628) or super-ego. Anima imparts to her the creative

1. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.291
instinct and super-ego the destructive instinct because whereas creation manifests itself most primordially through anima, destruction does so "most clearly in the formation of the super-ego." Similarly, the Swineherd is simultaneously animus and id, animus leading him to sacrifice himself at the altar of anima and id "to the satisfaction of its instinctive needs, in accordance with the pleasure principle."

Becoming thus the archetypes of primordial essences, they work out microcosmically the love-hate nexus and macrocosmically the fusion of the solar and the lunar myths in which "just as the solar hero must die, the corruptible thus putting on incorruption, so the lunar heroine must descend, the incorruptible thus putting on corruption."

In accordance with their essence, the Queen and the Swineherd work out their union not through the growth of events but through rhythmic variation in the same event. Evidencing "pre-coital depression" on her part, the Queen has yawned and stretched herself three times in expectation of the advent of "some man —— some terrifying man". (P.622)

In spite of being the emblem of the moon, she expects him to sing "the dung of the swine", (P.621) the motif introduced into the play by the First Attendant, who is a facet of the Queen herself. "Cruel as the winter of virginity" (P.624) as she is, she regards the Swineherd's utterances as "complexities of insult" (P.625) heaped upon her head. This is naturally so because he is as yet "foul rags —— scratched foul flesh."

1. Franz Alexender, The Psychoanalysis of Total Personality, New York 1929  P.159
2. Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures, New York 1933  P.104
3. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964  P.284
In this respect he himself gives the best description of his genesis and growth:

Have I not come
Through dust and mire? There in the dust and mire
Beasts scratched my flesh; my memory too is gone,
Because great solitudes have driven me mad
But when I look into a stream, the face
That troubles upon the surface makes me think
My origin more foul than rag or flesh. (P.623)

"Foul in his rags, his origin, his speech", (P.626) he talks of nothing but "an ignorant forest and the dung of swine". (P.625)

The forest, as F.A.C. Wilson has pointed out on Taylor's authority, "is a common Platonic symbol for the fallen world." Similarly, the dung of swine is "the foul deposit (feces)" that as yet only stinks and does not "withal smell sweetly." Derived from the alchemical lore, it shows the Swineherd like dung upon the ground as the lover in Blake's 'In A Myrtle Shade' who subsists upon the soil, the spiritualisation of which has not yet taken place. Naturally, his utterances are outrageous to the Queen and she has him beheaded. As he is being led to be beheaded, he narrates the story of a woman

"That stood all bathed in blood — a drop of blood
Entered her womb and then begat a child." (P.626)

At first the story is completely abhorrent to the Queen:

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1. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition, London 1961 P.90
A severed head! She took it in her hands;
She stood all bathed in blood; the blood begat.
O foul, foul, foul! (p.626)

But then it shakes her to the very roots of her virginal solitude because baptism in blood, the water of Life, is at hand for her to enter the blood and mire of existence. This becomes evident from the shedding of the veil after which like a hallucinated animal she turns towards the severed head, holds it above her head and sings a song of compassion and confession:

Child and darling, hear my song,
Never cry I did you wrong;  
Cry that wrong came not from me
But my virgin cruelty.
Great my love before you came,
Greater when I loved in shame,
Greatest when there broke from me
Storm of virgin cruelty. (p.628)

Then she dances a Salome-like dance to the accompaniment of music and consummates her union with the Swineherd. This union and all that leads to it are articulated mainly through lyrics which form the nucleus of the play. These lyrics are five in number: three are sung by the Attendants who are the partial aspects of the Queen and the Swineherd and two by the Queen and the severed head, respectively.

The first and the last lyric are complementary to each other establishing what Helen Vendler has called, "the common denominator of love."
The first lyric defines the nature of love which is all-pervasive and antithetical. Whether it is absolute spirituality (crown of gold) or absolute grossness (dung of swine) it takes the being completely in its possession and changes him into his opposite or antithetical image. Even Pythagoras, the prototypal philosopher who "began the process of translating the Greek mystery religions into philosophy," is liable to become so at its hand because

"What cares love for this or that?" (P.622)

The last lyric recapitulates the idea of the first lyric. Written in the form of a lyrical dialogue between the two Attendants as the persona of the Queen and the Swineherd, respectively, it contraposes the question

"What can she lack whose emblem is the moon?"(P.630) to the answer

"Their desecration and the lover's night," (P.630) in such a way that we "are not left holding a mere Maeterlinkean mood, but are given a theme, namely, that if we are to live, our wintry and saintly virginity must descend into the dung of passion." Given philosophical proportions, it shows that eternity is in love with time and it is incomplete in its separation from its productions.

Sung by the First Attendant, the second lyric has the Queen as its persona. In this lyric "an ancient Irish Queen" (P.627) sings of the transfiguration of her poet-lover into a disembodied singing throat after his physical decapitation by her. Outwardly she denies that

1. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B.Yeats and Tradition, London 1961 P.86
she ordered the beheading of her lover but inwardly she confesses that she did so to test his claim that even death would not prevent him from glorifying her beauty. So she had her lover beheaded for the uniqueness of experience which women may not have in spite of the wildness of their passion. By implication this is the reasoning of the Queen in favour of the decapitation of the Swineherd as a result of which she descends from the emblematic niche to the terrain where love consumes itself through desecration.

The third lyric is sung by the First Attendant again and herein is revealed the subterranean self of the Queen. Simulating as the Great Mother, she sings a lullaby to the severed head of the Swineherd. She dilates upon the virgin cruelty that has led her to award to the Swineherd creative death through decapitation. This virgin cruelty was born of the transference of what Freud would like to call her "narcissistic libido" into the super-ego. As a consequence of this transference, this libido was divested of its object-libido. Becoming infolded upon itself, it lost its natural flow and rhythm and became static and decreative like eternity itself. However, when its object-libido is restored to it in the form of the Swineherd, as time may be restored to eternity, it breaks in all its fury:

Great my love before you came
Greater when I loved in shame
Greatest when there broke from me
Storm of virgin cruelty. (P.628)

1. Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, London 1950
In the fourth lyric, the myth of the Queen and the Swineherd emerges from the humblest of the ditties. Narrated through the personae of Jack and Jill, it universalises the myth by conceiving it from a subaltern perspective. Since it is not just an humble ditty, its narration of the parabolic and similitudinous sufferings of these nobodies refers, however indirectly, to the sufferings of Minerva and Dionysus. Similarly, its sign-symbols allude to the metaphorical symbols of the myths, as for example 'hill' "stands both for Calvary and the Mount of Abiegnos of the mystics, the penitential mountain." Thus by relating the subaltern perspective of Jack and Jill to the fundamental perspective of the Queen and the Swineherd, the playwright creates "a divine drama" in the magical or alchemical sense of the word. Condensing "the myth of The Resurrection" and reversing "its perspective", it is far from being an empty play, "as though a dramatist, ignorant of Christianity or history, were to make a play out of the communion service." Rather it is completely archetypal, a play-in-miniature, explaining the nature of reality by looking at the anthropological being through the mode of astrology.

( x )

The basis of The Herne's Egg is again that "Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed."
However, they do not remain thus wed when they are taken to be complete and whole in themselves. Then they become disjunctive and the disjunction thus occurring makes the supernatural distant, static and decreative and the natural parodic, degenerate and infolded. As a result the whole reality turns into what Whitaker has called "the fol-de-rol" in which the status of the divine is uncertain because its victory over the human is effete and inefficacious and that of the human is sordid because its "apocalypse is amid recurring cycles of folly."

In the play the supernatural is symbolised by The Great Herne, "the manifestation of the Godhead under the symbol of the bird." With its occidental and oriental overtones, it relates to Zeus in the Greek mythology and to the Swan in the Indian. The Swan is the incarnation of Bramah who lays a Golden Egg at the beginning of each Mahamanvantara. In addition to these overtones of the ancient lore, it has those of the romantic lore as well. For example, it is "a god like Blake's Urizen-Nobodaddy and Shelley's Jupiter, an irrational, arbitrary Devourer, not one of the Prolific, to employ the terms of Blake's dialectic." Embodying the mythical as well as the romantic associations, it exists manifestly and immanently in the form of the Egg. It is as much Blake's Mundane Shell or Egg of Los as it is the Golden Egg of Bramah. Both in its immanent and manifest forms it has "the plurisignificance, the evasiveness, and therefore the independent life, characteristic of the images stored in the Great Memory, as opposed to the one-sidedness of allegorical emblems."

1. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964 P.292
2. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition, London 1961 P.112
3. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972 P.423
Because of this disjunction between the supernatural and the natural, these are taken in a one-sided way by the characters of the play. For example, Attracta, "the Great Herne's bride or promised bride" (P.648) is one with the supernatural. A blow at a flute carved out of a herne's thigh is enough to transport her into an ecstatic union with the Great Herne. This ecstatic union is identical with sexual intercourse partaking which she feels that

Strong sinew and soft flesh
Are foliage round the shaft
Before the arrowsmith
Has stripped it; and I pray
That I, all foliage gone,
May shoot into my joy. (PP.653-654)

Such sexual intercourse, as is emblematical of mystical union, is "a state without a grammatical object" as Roland Barthes would like to term it. Its duration never matures because it is not a moment in life, but the whole of life. That is why Attracta envisions the prospective marital marriages of Mary, Kate and Agnes as transfigured like her own mystical marriage.

But these three girls regard her as "a puppet" or "a doll upon a wire". (P.654) The male characters of the play, particularly those who "handle, penetrate and possess her", (P.662) take her to be the victim of delusions. Congal, the most daring of them all, places her in the perspective of deluded and inhibited women in general:

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1. Roland Barthes, On Racine, New York 1964 P.49
Women thrown into despair
By the winter of their virginity
Take its abominable snow, and make
An image of God or bird or beast
To feed their sensuality. (P.649)

This is because Congal, Aedh and their companions are entirely worldly and do not have any perception of the supernatural and the divine. They do not look at the world as an expanded form of sexual intercourse that may dissolve into itself all the conflicts of the contraries, but regard it as "prelapsarian equilibrium." Sustaining equal losses, they have fought fifty battles and have learnt nothing from the futility into which each battle has been ending. Apparently comparable "to Blake's Wars of Eden," their battles, essentially, have "nothing visionary about them." Fought with table-legs, candle-sticks and kitchen-utensils, they show human beings as sordid with no power to respond to "absurdity by nobility." Instead, their sordidness and absurdity become all the more parodic when they propose to enrich the banquet following the customary peace after the fiftieth battle with "a certain novelty or relish," (P.648) namely, the sacred Herne's eggs. When hinderances are put in the way of this sacrilege by Attracts, they improvise a court to substitute their own for a higher judgement:

1. Peter Ure, Yeats The Playwright, London 1963
2. Harold Bloom, Yeats, New York 1972
--- We seven in the name of the law
Must handle, penetrate, and possess her,
And do her a great good by that action,
Melting out the virgin snow,
And that snow-image, the Great Herne;
For nothing less than seven men
Can melt that snow, but when it melts
She may being free from all obsession
Live as Woman should. (P.662)

As the previous sacrilege has been instrumental in getting
Aedh and his companions killed, similarly this outrage calles upon "a
most memorable punishment" (P.668) upon the heads of its perpetrators.
Expressing its wrath through thunder, the Godhead pronounces the
metapsychotic punishment reserved for Congal and his companions through
Attracta. They are to be reborn "a step or two" (P.669) down the ladder
of being in sundry animal shapes. Congal's companions are so much
frightened of the Godhead's wrath that they prostrate to the thunder
and withdraw their claim of having possessed and penetrated Attracta.
Only Congal sticks to this claim even though on the holy mountain of
Slieve Fuadh, he is mortally wounded with a kitchen spit by the Fool
whom in the last moments of his life, he hysterically suspects to be his
own self. Attracta is, however, so much impressed by his assertion that
she hastens to copulate with Corney so that the metapsychotic punishment
may land his soul in human form:

Come lie with me upon the ground,
Come quickly into my arms, come quickly, come
Before his body has had time to cool. (P.677)
However, before the completion of their coitus, two donkeys also copulate and Congal's soul enters the form of a donkey. So realisation dawns upon Attracta that spiritual communion, as designed by supemature, is not enough; sexual union as fashioned by nature has its own justification:

I lay with the Great Herne, and he,
Being all a spirit, but begot
His image in the mirror of my spirit,
Being all sufficient to himself
Begot himself; but there's a work
That should be done, and that work needs
No bird's beak nor claw, but a man,
The imperfection of a man. (P.677)

In this encounter Congal is explicitly a travesty of Cuchulain as the Great Herne is implicitly so of Zeus. No wonder the total impression of the play synchronises with Corney's exclamation towards the end of the play,

"All that trouble and nothing to show for it,
Nothing but just another donkey." (P.678)

This impression is in keeping with the mock-heroic and apocalyptic-parodic mode of the play due to which it ends up as a farcical fantasia upon heroic and mythological themes. This idea of the play finds confirmation in the words of the playwright himself in the beginning:

"I have a three-act tragi-comedy in my head to write
in Majorea not in blank verse, but in short lines
like 'Fire', but a larger number of four-stress lines —
as wild a play as The Player Queen — but with
more philosophic depth."

Philosophic depth there undoubtedly is in this play and Giorgio
Melchiori and F.A.C. Wilson have explored its occidental and oriental
aspects with overmuch pertinacity and perception. However it is true
of the subject-matter only. It does not become its truth-content, for
all the playwright's endeavour when, in keeping with the mock-heroic
and apocalyptic-parodic sense of the play, he brings in "the stylised
battles, Corney scolding his life-size toy-donkey, the village-children
catechizing Attracta, Congal's six child-like men ... and all oddly
conjoined with the sexual theme, rape and the sacred marriage."

In the same way is conceived the tragic pattern. With but
one leg, the Great Herne has structural levity corresponding with the
parodic levity of the protagonists. He is poised at the mountain-top
while they fret and fume in the valley below. Similarly, Attracta articulates
through images designed around fire or ice while Congal and his companions
do so through mundane and even sordid objects of nature. Fleas, dogs,
kettles, broken legs of chairs, caps and donkeys, etc. abound in their
utterances. While they are beckoned to fighting, eating and copulating,
Attracta is, in contrast, beckoned to the bridal chamber of the Great
Herne by music that is sounded through the magical flute.

In spite of these dexterous measures, the playwright has failed
to make this play a great poetic drama. The matrix of his creative process

2. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963
is affirmative capability of the lyrical sort while he has tried to
write the play from a bias of negative capability of the dramatic
measure. For this misdirected thrust of his creative power, the play
acquires a false self-determination. It becomes only apparently
archetypal, though in exaggerated enthusiasm F.A.C. Wilson has compared
it with such archetypal paintings of Pablo Picasso as 'Minotaur carrying
a Dying Horse', 'News for the Delphic Oracle' and 'Ulysses and the
Sirens'. No doubt "many connexions suggest themselves between Picasso
and Yeats," but they are confined almost exclusively to 'The Nude/Clown
Paintings' and 'The Crazy Jane Poems'. The Minotaur-paintings of
Picasso are archetypal with brutal historical reverberations because
through the motif of the savage mythological beast, half-man and half­
beast, they give expression to the violence that has taken into
possession every aspect of modern life. The use of archetypes in The
Horse's Egg does not give out any historical reverberation. It is only
academic with all its subtlety. So the play does not amount to more than
the strangest, the wildest thing that Yeats had ever written in the
poetic/dramatic genre.

1. F.A.C. Wilson, W.B. Yeats and Tradition, London 1961 P.115
2. John Berger, Success and Failure of Picasso, Penguin Books Middlesex
   1965 P.197
3. About the Minotaur-paintings (The World of Picasso, P.132, New York
   1967) Picasso has himself observed, "I did not paint the war — But
   there is no doubt that the war is there in the pictures which I
   painted them." This denotes the fusion of myth and history and as
   Lael Wortenbaker at the same page has remarked, "— in the distortion
   of familiar subjects — screaming horses, grisly animals, broken
   children and tormented adults — Picasso has made a more stunning
   portrait of war's cruelty than even a camera could record."
The Death of Cuchulain recapitulates the main motifs of tragedies and dance-dramas of the playwright. It prognosticates the fate of the dramaturgy and dramatic genre developed by him in his lifetime with passion and rigour. The main motifs dealt with in this play are those of heroic fury, sexual revenge, sacrifice of the male at the hands of the female and transfiguration of the male as a result of the cruelty of the female. Thus the theme of the play is not just "the death of the hero seen as the final irony of his fate." It is much more comprehensive than that, because it deals with the hero's subjection, while alive, to the antinomies of strength and weakness, passion and weariness, forbearance and indignation, and transfiguration when dead, as a result of enmities incurred through these antinomies.

This comprehensive theme is worked out through the fate of Cuchulain who, in the days of his youth, triumphed with strength over the warriors who challenged him and with sexual passion overpowered women who encountered him. Now grown weary and senile with old age, he is beleaguered at a place surrounded by the troops of Maeve. Sent with a letter by his devoted wife Emer, Eithne Inguba, his mistress, conveys to him a false message under the magical effect of Morrigu. Emer asks him to leave the place while Inguba tells him not to move. She warns him that if he does so he will face odds which "no man can face and live" (P.695).

Cuchulain adopts an antinomial attitude towards the whole affair. He excuses Eithne Inguba with a sense of "heroic magnanimity."

thinking that she has been inveigled into telling a lie not by Morrigu but by her own self which needs "a younger man, a friendlier man". (P.696) Against the troops of Maeve, however, his youthful scorn returns and he speaks out his irrevocable decision coldly but passionately:

        --- I am for the fight,
        I and my handful are set upon the fight;
        We have faced great odds before, a straw decided. (P.696)

        In accordance with his decision, Cuchulain goes out to fight and is fatally wounded in the battle. He fastens himself to "a pillar-stone with his belt". (P.698-699) Aoife, the wild valiant woman enters and declaims with hatred and love, and he concedes to her the right to kill him. As his memory guides him to tell,

        "And now I know your name,
        Aoife, the mother of my son. We met
        At the Hawk's Well under the withered trees.
        I killed him upon Baile's Strand, that is why
        Maeve parted ranks that she might let you through
        You have a right to kill me." (P.699)

        Before Aoife has done her job, the Blind Man straddles upon the scene. Taking him to be some countryman of Cuchulain, she hides herself. The Blind Man is the same who had met Cuchulain on Baile's Strand. There he was indifferent but here he is interested in killing Cuchulain because he has been promised twelve pennies for the job. With great fortitude and forbearance, Cuchulain puts himself at the mercy of the Blind Man who "though not Tiresias or Thamyris" has the commonsense

1. Balachandra Kajan, W.B. Yeats, London 1965
to keep the knife sharp because it then cuts the dinner well. The
dying Cuchulain has a vision of his transfigured self:

There floats out there

The shape I shall take when I am dead,

My soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape,

And is not that a strange shape for the soul

Of a great fighting man. (P.702)

When Cuchulain is dead, Morrigu comes and admits that she
master-minded the whole incident. Triumphanty she tells of the
persons who wounded him upon the field of battle. Her declamation is
followed by Emer's dance who, shedding aside her life-long docility,
dances a dance of sacrificial and ritualistic nature: "she so moves
that she seems to rage against the heads of those that had wounded
Cuchulain, perhaps makes movements as though to strike them, going three
times round the circle of heads." (P.703)

As it is, the play is a cumulation of motifs, characters and
incidents. It is not "the most majestically designed and the most
perfect" of the playwright's Cuchulain-plays, giving evidence of "the
characteristic Yeatsian method, which has operated in all these plays,
of building up episode against episode and character against character
so that the antitheses they form permit the ironic inference to be drawn,
or culminate in a moment of revealing double-natured action: the heroic
decision that is also a mistaking —- the love or courage whose expression
in action unties the knot one way only to tighten it another." Instead,
the play has a feeling that "spills out on all sides". In it "the

1. Peter Ure, Yeats, the Playwright, London 1963 PP.82-83
dance-form has not survived at all to exist indistinguishably from theme, gesture and rhythm, etc. Rather "the form exists so that it may be abused, and most of the feeling is in the abuse."

For this spilling over, the play exists as play within a play framed by the Old Man's Prologue in the beginning and the Harlot's Song at the end. Like The Sutradhara of the ancient Indian Sanskrit Drama but with little of the latter's control over the growth of the dramatic pattern, the Old Man is the prototype of Yeats's wisdom and poetics. He enunciates the basic aspects of the Yeatsian play in the absence of which it can be understood only incompletely and prefactorily.

First of all, the Old Man gives a glimpse of his own self. He is nurtured in wisdom and experience where wisdom is the essence of the popular consciousness of the past and the experience of awareness that imparts concrete proportions to this consciousness. He is so much the nexus of wisdom and experience that he is divested of everything particular and individual. He is so old that he has forgotten the name of his "father and mother". Being a voice from the Collective Unconscious, he denounces middle-class preoccupations in this vile age. In spite of the levelling zweigist of the age, he favours plays upon subjects derived from "the old epics". In consonance with subjects of traditional sanctity and ancient wisdom, he wants a distinguished

1. Denis Donoghue, Yeats, London 1971 P.105

The truth of Denis Donoghue's observation is to some extent foretold by Peter Ure himself who (Yeats, London 1963) feels the second part of the play to have "weakening rhythms" (P.102). With the same intuitive feeling T.R.Henn (The Lonely Tower, London 1950, P.258) recommends the play to be read more as a dramatic poem.
"Audience of fifty or a hundred" If they are a larger number, it is his earnest wish that they should imbibe the ethos of the distinguished audience, i.e., at the preliminary level "not to shuffle their feet or talk when the actors are talking." (P.693)

The basic aspects of the play are music and dance. Comprising "a singer, a piper, and a drummer", the music is "of the beggarman, Homer's music." Essentially it is folk-music, music of the countryside with melody as its determining matrix. Through a melodious interplay of sound-effects articulating motifs derived from man's relationship with nature, it tends to impart contemplative proportions to traditional sanctity and ancient wisdom, the social and philosophical aspects of the life of the countryside. Similarly, the dance, that the Old Man upholds, is folk-dance in which the dancer is distinguished for her genre rather than individuality. Such a dancer can be "the tragi-comedian dancer, the tragic dancer" having "upon the same neck love and loathing, life and death". (P.694) In comparison with genre dancers\textsuperscript{1} and individualistic dancers as those painted by Degas which seem to the Old Man to be sheerly contemptible: "I spit upon their short bodices, their stiff stays, their toes whereon they spin like peg-tops, above all that chamber-maid face ... I spit! I spit! I spit!". (P.694)

The Old Man talks of his poetics with Yeatsean gaiety "which, while defying time, need not anxiously prolong its own temporal existence.

\textsuperscript{1} According to Frank Kermode (The Romantic Image, London 1957, P.76), the chief characteristics of the genre dancer are "the face without intellectual disturbance, the meaning fully incarnate, no intrusive character, for so long as the dance lasts the dancer cannot be distinguished from it."
It is the joy of symbolic art — as Yeats had once echoed 1 — rather than the prudence of mimetic art, which teaches us (like the Blind Man) to preserve our physical body. 2 The essence of this poetics permeates the whole body of the play. The music is intended to determine the growth and consummation of the motifs of the play. Similarly, there is dance wherein "the expressionless mask" of the dancer develops "into a featureless black block of wood." 3 The categorical presence of music and dance shows that the ancient sovereign life can best be illuminated by symbolic art. The consequent spilling-over that occurs simultaneously shows that the process of this illumination is extremely hazardous.

It becomes all the more hazardous when along with this the life of the historical analogues of the mythical personages is to be illuminated. Strictly speaking, this aspect cannot be made an integral part of the dramatic structure itself. All the same it can be related to it lyrically through a song, etc., as the destiny of Pearse and Connolly is related to that of Cuchulain through the Song of the Harlot. For this the persona has to be such as may be an archetypal emanation of ancient wisdom, the epic side of mythical reality. In the convention of the No̖ play and under the influence of Alchemy and Blake, Yeats regards the Harlot to be such an emanation. In Alchemy "meretrix the whore is the prima materia, the dark or unconscious corpus imperfectum that must be redeemed;" and in Blake

1. Thomas R. Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Chapel Hill 1964
2. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, London 1957
In the first stanza of her Song, the Harlot says that mythical Irish heroes with their "muscular bodies" and "long pale faces" come to make love to her but cannot consummate the sexual act because their bodies and hers are disparate and she can get "no grip upon their thighs". (P-704) In the second stanza, she slides into the Easter Rising where she feels that every known and unknown Irish man born of woman derives enthusiasm from the recklessness of Cuchulain. In the third and final stanza, she glorifies him as having been an unparalleled man in every way the like of whom has no "modern woman born". (P.705) Thus through her song of woman's urge for the ideal male, the reproduction of the analogues of the ideal, and the failure in the modern times to do so, the Harlot awards proportions of glory to Cuchulain and the life of which he was the emanation. For this she makes use of an intricate complex of traditional symbols: "birds that are souls, the harlot and virgin, hero and beggar, the Blind Man who brings death, the horse from the sea, the delicate veil of woman's power."

The Harlot is able to articulate ancient wisdom derived from the life and personality of a mythical hero because she herself is envisioned as a mythical being. Her whole gesture is envisioned as of

2. T.R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy, London 1956 P.212
hearing ancient wisdom from the substratum of the human self. Actually she is also a historical being and in the historical context she is "the deracinee," out of accord with the traditional sanctity and ancient wisdom of the past. In the modern times she is completely divested of the non-chalance attributed to her in mythical lore, because now her whole gesture is seeing so that the social may be sexualised for her personal benefit. Living under the sign of sex, she de-mythicises herself further in the life of the super-city by acting as an amateur of sexual perversions. So she has to make an excessive use of her "protective eye" for "scrutinising the passersby" whose sexual aspect is the promise rather than the aim for her. As a result her gaze has changed into glance and her openness into vulgarity. Her situation and self have undergone a basic change, and so has reality which has become historical owing to the ever developing relations of man with self and society. The Yeatsean play fails to cope with historical reality because it is not in rapport with history that transforms nature in accordance with the wishes of humanity. However, it is a consummate vehicle for illuminating mythical reality of which historical reality is a derivation. Implicitly and explicitly, all this becomes evident from an analysis of the theme and form of The Death of Cuchulain.