

Research Article

Now I May Wither into the Truth: Re-reading Some Poems of W. B. Yeats in the Middle Phase

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Abstract

The poetry of W. B. Yeats covers almost three distinctive and successive periods in the history of English literature such as the late Victorian, Edwardian and the Modern period and the poetic stature he attained in due course virtually shows a zodiac range of interests expressed with a correspondingly strenuous maturity in form and style spanning over decades. The greatness of Yeats' poetry lies in the simple fact that he could successfully integrate thoughts, feelings and ideas into a coherent body of experience. Apparently, the initial beginning of the poet in the fashion of the romantics and Pre-Raphaelites with an emerging drift to realism in the middle phase, hardly gives any hint of the complexity of Yeats' major poems where the persona represents divergent claims to consciousness typical of a poetic universe (constituted mainly by three practical passions in his life, viz, poetry, love and Irish nationalism) which reserves room both for the crisp and the casual; the regal and the ribald; the mundane and the mysterious. However, a meticulous reading of Yeats' poetry reveals a thorough progress towards making poetry not only a natural utterance for the poet, but also a symbol of a coveted identity - a 'Unity of Being' – an ideal which, for example, breathtakingly comes close to realization in a seminal piece like *Sailing to Byzantium*. The present article focuses on some poems taken from the middle period of Yeats' poetry so as to trace an element of continuity in the Yeatsian poetics.

Keywords

Romantics, Natural Utterance, Irish Nationalism, Unity of Being

1. Introduction

In this heath strewn with shades of dire waste,
Bring once from Heaven, the image of Faith, O Poet!
Fancy, now Take me Back Homeward,
Within the folds of the familiar world...

(Tagore's EbarPhiraoMorey. Chitra. trans. lines 42-45) [13]

The overall tenor of literary criticism attached to the poetry of W. B. Yeats chiefly prefers most of the popular poems written in the later phase of his long career as the best markers of his poetic genius. But quite contrary to the prevalent critical tendency, maturity in the poetry of Yeats, as regards his choice

of themes and technique, becomes thoroughly evident as a continuous process all through his poetic career. For a careful reader, it can be traced right from the dreamy, passionate and visionary charm of the Innisfree days, through a more serious introspection of poetic subjects filtered through the tangled vines of interests (which though gravitate under the prism of his baffled love experiences with a resultant bitterness and ironic poetic mindset and an acknowledgement of reality as manifest in Responsibilities of the middle phase); finally to an exclusive quest for an overall pattern of Unity in the edifice of

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his experiences in the last phase – a pattern that would accommodate divergent moods and interests arising out of his erotic, aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual affiliations as one finds expressed in the famous Byzantium poems. His self-appraisal as a poet speaks of a strikingly rare catholicity of interests with an artistic ingenuity of purpose – “I had made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, ...” [16].

The present paper attempts a selective analysis of poems culled from the anthologies belonging to Yeats’ middle phase viz, *In the Seven Woods* (1903), *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914).

Understandably, the poetry written in these ‘crowded years’ [8], (as Norman Jeffares has rightly termed, *Introduction*, xiv), reflects an amazing diversity of personal interests and poetic affiliations such as– the poet’s active engagement with the Rhymers’ Club for honing his poetic skills in the company of stalwarts like Lionel Johnson; experiment with the works of French symbolism in quest for metaphors to express complexity in experience; imbibing deep into the spirit of the Celtic Twilight with a resultant dream of reviving Irish nationalism in art and Culture; valorizing the refinement and grace of dwindling aristocracy with an occasional diversion into the gusty enjoyment of coarseness and primitive vitality in life (as in the *Beggar* poems, anticipatory of *Crazy Jane* series in later days). But under the veneer of all such poetic attempts, the readers overhear, as already mentioned, a subdued heart-sob of the speaker owing to his failure in love. Naturally, it is the love lyrics of Yeats that comparatively illustrate best the change in tone and the shift in poetic worlds in the middle poems — from the glow of an autumnal twilight loud with a distant melody foreshadowing a somber tragedy round the corner in earlier works -- to a gloomy glade of being (in the middle period) where skepticism, disillusionment and self-awareness chasten the poetic vision so as to discern the stark realities of life that so long remained eclipsed to a mind which fed on dreams and fairyland.

The sinuous development in terms of themes catalyzed mainly by failed love and bitter experiences about Ireland, is nevertheless, anticipated beforehand in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) wherein the poem *He thinks of his past greatness* when a part of the constellations of Heaven posits an ironic re-evaluation of the predicament of a young and visionary speaker who sought to be ensconced within an ideal conjunction of poetry, love and patriotism.

The opening lines set up the tempo by articulating the pangs of disillusionment in the speaker’s public and private space.

I have drunk ale from the Country of the Young
And weep because I know all things now: (lines 1-2)

The loss of innocence at the cost of knowledge, the failure of dreams that once intoxicated the speaker with the hope of an inexhaustible fount of youthful inspiration and fame that would initiate him into the matrix of wisdom, creativity and mytho-cultural associations of the Irish; find an eloquent

expression in the following excerpt:

I have been a hazel- tree, and they hung
The Pilot star and the crooked plough
Among my leaves from time out of mind: (lines 3-5)

But the urge for creativity and poetic impulse, perception of the right direction and the promise of a lugubrious craftsmanship suggested above – seem to be aborted in medias res owing to the speaker’s failure in love. The speaker, who once dreamt of a nebulous existence in the galaxy of the greats, now turns, unlike the pair in Donne’s *Canonization* [4], a reluctant agent to voice the pangs of unrequited love at different levels of existence. The closing lines turn the poem into a moving testament of how failure in love more than any other reason, sobered the outlook of a fervent, visionary poet.

2. The Middle Phase: An Emerging Gleam Beyond the Mist and Snow

The poems grouped under the collection *In The Seven Woods* (named after the number of woods in Coole Park) betray a distinct maturity with an increasing dominance of realism over nostalgia manifest in the forms of an emerging tone of bitterness and irony, a cautious choice of diction bereft of ornamentation and an occasional passion for the dwindling cult of nobility and aristocracy. However, the major theme in this section continues to be defeated love with its fading embers often with a white-hot dazzle of passion which however leads to a mature stance to experience and a rigorous eschewal of grand metaphors as explicatives of his lofty emotions.

The opening poem *The Arrow*, with the title reminiscent of the arrows of MadanaorKandarpa, the God of love in Hindu pantheon with their Western Counterpart Cupid, points to an unabashed recognition of the gross, physical side of love that happens to constitute a major stuff of Yeats’ later poetry: “I thought of your beauty, and this arrow/ made out of a wild thought, is in my marrow” (lines 1-2). Yet, the growing obsession with the flesh in spite of a teasing awareness of age, -- placed in the predicament posed by the muse getting younger within the debilitating physical frame -- can hardly suppress the thwarted ambition for union with a beauty somewhat Hellenic, a rare form simply archaic in this age, as an ‘old song.’

This beauty is kinder, yet for a reason
I could weep that the old is out of season. (lines 7-8)

The poem *Never Give All the Heart* adds little to the overall defeatist tone, save and except an astonishing maturity and austerity of style as to how the persona makes an unostentatious confession of failure in love and disillusionment for taking coquetry as a sign of love, with the help of the barest possible words which again, are sulphurous with a brutal frankness: “For thy, for all the smooth lips can say/ Have given their hearts upto the play” (lines 9-10).

In the poem *Red Hanrahan’s Song About Ireland*, one

finds a nice conjunction of passion and patriotism in the projection of Maud Gonne as Ireland. Notably, the impetuosity of personal feelings has been astutely garbed here under stirring images of Irish revolutionary zeal.

Our courage breaks like an old tree in a black wind and dies,

But we have hidden in our hearts the flame out of the eyes
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan. (lines 4-6)

The scenario receives the dimension of a ritual relating to folklore in the following excerpt where a concerted urge for fulfilling personal desire works in tandem with nationalistic fervour couched in the form of a blatant choice of diction that marks a tortuous progress in Yeats' poetic craftsmanship.

Angers that are like noisy clouds have set our hearts abeat;
But we have all bent low and low and kissed the quiet feet
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan. (lines 10-12)

The ending of the poem shows a spiritual twist where Cathleen alias Maud Gonne is transformed into a deity of deliverance for liberating Ireland from the ignoble strife of mire and blood.

Like heavy flooded waters our bodies and our blood;
But purer than a tall candle before the Holy Rood
Is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan. (lines 15-17)

Situating himself in the bardic and folkloric tradition of Ireland (as the character Red Hanrahan suggests), Yeats transmutes his love for Maud Gonne as a gesture of sacrifice – a similar sort of altruism that Cathleen, a traditionary old lady in Irish myths, had sought from young Irish poets for the country's freedom from the Colonial rule. This objectification of personal crises/conditions with the help of transcendent images borrowed from the realm of myths and legends has been illumined by C. M. Bowra thus: "... In the first edition he appears in different characters, as Aedh, Hanrahan or Michael Robartes according to the part that he plays, but in later editions these characters, are reduced to "he" "[1].

In the poem *Under the Moon*, the search for a lost happiness is expressed in terms of a mythical/mystical setting which serves as an objective correlative for the speaker's lost love. Two recurrent words - 'old' and 'story' – set the tone of an inexorable reality of temperance and moderation characterizing Yeats' poetry and thought at the present state. The alternate saga of splendour and loss characterizes the passage from ritual to romance; from the mythical world to the mundane which spanning over a vast panorama, acts as the stage for dramatizing the intentions of the speaker.

The baffling experience of failed love, acquiring a mythic dimension with a contemporaneous validity, lurks in the poet's psyche and the bleakness of passion with an astounding temerity of statement is conspicuously marked in the concluding lines of the poem.

Because of something old under the fatigued horn
Of the hunter's moon, that hung between the night and the day,

To dream of women whose beauty was folded in dismay,
Even in an old story, is a burden not to be borne. (lines

23-26)

The poem *O Do not Love Too Long* presents the contentious relation between infatuation and disillusionment in the lover – speaker.

Their own thought from the other's
We were so much at one.

But O, in a minute she changed –

O do not love too long, (lines 7-10)

Here, the pathetic shift from the third person plural possessive in the first line to the first person in the second raises a hope for reciprocity which however caves in soon in the face of reality -- for want of mutuality in experience as stated in the last two lines of the quotation above. The inanity of unreturned love sounds now as boring and dull as 'an old song' containing though a grain of truth -- the veracity of experience in this modern world of anarchy and philistinism. Now, the speaker for whom 'Singing is Being', to quote from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* (No. 3, line 7) [11], can only sing a song (may be of cautionary excellence) even if it be 'old'. The poet's condition ironically also reminds one, to think sweet and sour, of Rilke's classic piece of advice to the young poets: "Therefore, dear Sir, love your solitude and try to sing out with the pain it causes you." ("Letters To A Young Poet", No. 4) [10].

The acute sense of nostalgia in a love-lorn poet / a visionary individual, fretting for Irish national/cultural revival and seeking parallels to his experience in the matted mazes of myth and folk-lore – characterize overall Yeats' poems discussed so far, and gives way to a sobriety in tone and outlook displaying thereby a striking maturity in craftsmanship in the poems grouped under *The Green Helmet* and *Other Poems and Responsibilities*. In some excellent pieces written in this period, poetry as it were, shows signs of being, and often actually becomes, what Yeats sought life-long to make it (poetry) – a natural utterance. While, as has been mentioned a number of times, the pathos for unfulfilled love constitutes to exist as a subterranean level of poetic consciousness throughout the whole poetic oeuvre of W. B. Yeats.

The very idea of making poetry a natural expression; the contention that Poetry is a spontaneous activity, not a deliberate art, comes out vividly in the poem named *Words* though interestingly enough, the revelation of the world-creating dimension of 'Words' is expressed here in an immediate context of /reference to the speaker's love experience. The opening lines of this poem gesture to an emotional dimension of thought which reaches out of the personal experience of bitterness due to lack of reciprocation of feelings, to the precarious condition of Ireland in general vis-à-vis his complex experience as a poet and nationalist.

I had this thought a while ago,
'My darling cannot understand
What I have done, or what would do
In this blind bitter land.' (lines 1-4)

The initial, naïve fascination for words that occupied the young dreamer who once believed 'Words alone are certain

good' (Song of the Happy Shepherd, line-10) at the beginning of his poetic journey, now matures into a confidence in his ability to express all the delicate shades and nuances of experience; in simpler terms, to make poetry a vessel for any of the moods, sweet or sour. To a sensible reader, the following excerpt not only reminds one, of the ironic wish-fulfillment of Maud Gonne's so-called consolatory words to the poet-- 'The world should thank me for not marrying you' (The Poetry of W. B. Yeats p. 9) -- a comment that kept engaging critics and admirers of Yeats' poetry over decades; but also betrays an amazing maturity in style with a total exclusion of anything gaudy and decorative in diction.

That every year I have cried, 'At length
My darling understands it all,
Because I have come into my strength,
And words obey my call'; (lines 9-12)

However, notwithstanding, the poet's acquisition of poetic goal for making words obedient to his call, the central Yeatsian dialectics comes into play in the last part where the speaker speculates over his dubious stance to two alternate possibilities -- fruition in love with a stoic compliance in private space vis-à-vis his present dilemma in personal sphere yet recompensed with poetic accomplishment; and the tone of expression as if points to an instinctive preference for the former state of existence.

That had she done so who can say
What would have shaken from the sieve?
I might have thrown poor words away
And been content to live. (lines 13-16)

An ironic reappraisal of Maud Gonne's role -- both in terms of the speaker's personal experience and of the prevailing condition of Irish freedom struggle -- constitutes the theme of the poem *No Second Troy*. As Helen was a part of myth, a unique creation that, being endowed with an unnatural beauty was destined to design the course of the history by determining the fates of nations, is after all, beyond all modes of ethical judgment such as accolade or accusation. Yet, whereas mythical Helen had after all a Troy to burn, the Hellenic attributes in Maud Gonne -- her bewitching beauty and a noble intransigence to radical ideals -- things that troubled the poet-lover and simpleton revolutionaries respectively; were but anachronistic in such philistine times that ironically reserve nothing appropriate or heroic for Her to destroy.

That nobleness made simple as a fire
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern? (lines 7-10)

The mild imputation for Maud Gonne's pampering of the ignorant mob with the cult of violence; her repudiation of the pathetic infatuation in the young poet; the magnitude of the speaker's suffering compared to the unedifying and abject subjugation in the former lot, -- all this gets welded here into a trenchant irony as in this single line expression - 'Had they but courage equal to desire?' (line 5)

However, the poet's tone of reconciliation in accepting

failure in love ('Why should I blame her that she filled my days /With misery,') in the final count matures into an objective vision of tragedy though perceived at a certain, restricted level of experience.

Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn? (lines 11-12)

The caustic irony in the confessional note, the stark nature of disillusionment; the alliance of the brusque and the unpretentious within a striking grandeur of thought; the boldness of comparison and an overall impression of a chiseled craftsmanship, single out *No Second Troy* as a signal of an astounding maturity that Yeats' poetry is about to achieve and the ironic stance to experience in *No Second Troy* later reaches a classic level of expression in a number of poems such as *Leda and the Swan*, *Easter 1916* for example. Terence Brown has aptly described the poet's love relation/experience as '... a highly charged literary romance in which difficult experience was made amenable to the transfiguring power of poetry' [2].

The tone of the poem *Reconciliation* as the title suggests, expresses a spiritual emptiness overtaking the poet following his separation in love ('... since you were gone, / My barren thoughts have chilled me to the bone' ..., lines 11-12) and a resolute attempt to cope with reality: "...but now/ We'll out, for the world lives as long ago;" ... (lines 7-8). Yet what is to note is that, the poet's knack for aristocracy and celebration of heroic themes were only derivatives of his grand passion of love -- 'the old high way of love' (to quote from poem *Adam's Curse*, line-37) [15] and the following excerpt categorically bears such a confession:

... You went from me, and I could find
Nothing to make a song about but kings,
Helmets, and swords, and half-forgotten things
That were like memories of you ... (lines 4-7).

The sobriety of tone that gestures to discarding an enforced reliance on myths and legends characterizing earlier works of the poet -- a theme reaching culmination in a masterpiece like *The Circus Animal's Desertion* in Yeats's later phase for example, - make such short lyrics like *Reconciliation* as significant markers of a continuity that finally serve to focus Yeats' early works in a new light as vitally contributing to his mature phase of writing.

The poems like *Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation* and *At Galway Horses* offer variations on Yeats' wistful treatment of dwindling Irish Aristocracy and traditions in the face of mass culture during the late 19th and early 20th century. In the former, the utopian urge for modernism in the common public expressed in the form[s] of demolishing the old relics (here the house of Lady Gregory in Coole) which testify to the sanctity of usage as parts of heritage ('Where passion and precision have been one/ Time out of mind', lines 2-3) only results, according to the poet, in sacrilegious acts of vandalism that reveal utter idiocy and, so to speak, a Quixotic foolishness -- '... to become too ruinous/ To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun?' (lines 4-5).

By situating the house in the 'Processional march of time,' the poet relates the house, as critic Bhabatosh Chatterjee has noted, 'to an epoch, to past glory and present decadence,' ... [3]. The expression 'sweet laughing eagle thoughts' points to the elements of bitterness and an ironic defiance to experience (happyorsad) - a striking departure from the poetic style of early Yeats in the form of a masculine vigour, a dramatic gusto and precision and a greater compression; features that would become the hallmarks of Yeats' future poetry.

In *At Galway Horses*, the poet through the images of a horse race lifts the veil upon the buoyant and vibrant Irish traditions that once moved the familiar world with spontaneity and vitality to the tune of its wild music. The closing lines as if envision a beacon-light of farewell of the halcyon days of Irish culture when life was an earnest and a vital experience as thrilling as horse-riding.

Hearing the whole earth change its tune,

Its flesh being wild, and it again

Crying aloud as the race course is, (lines 12-14)

Notably, the observance was ever characterized by the vicarious pleasure of keen watchers of the show at Galway: "We, too, had good attendance once, / Hearers and hearteners of the work;" ... (lines 5-6).

While discussing Yeats' rootedness in Irish tradition (as shown in these above mentioned poems) and his writing in English with the awareness of 'the un-English traits in himself', critic A. G. Stock has made the following observation:

He accepted the difference and trained his genius on it. It enabled him [...] to find sources of thought and imagery which both imposed their own discipline on him and led his mind forward into new ranges of poetry.[12]

The last significant poem in the *Green Helmet* collection to reckon with is *The Mask* which, as the name suggests, dramatizes (under the garb of personal expression, seemingly urged by an immediacy of tone), the conflict between appearance and reality, anticipating much the celebrated dialectical nature of consciousness characterizing Yeats' poetic theory which receives an immaculate treatment in his later works.

Poems published under *Responsibilities* show an altogether new turn to a frank, insular recognition of reality and an ironic dismissal of all earlier poetic preoccupations with a scathing sense of bitterness often tinged with savage irony. The opening piece *Introductory Rhymes* reads like an apology addressed to the forefathers primarily for the poet's inability to continue the family line through marriage owing to 'a barren passion's sake'(line 19). Then he recounts his genealogy in adulation as to how the diverse roles of his ancestors -- as scholars, merchants and soldiers -- served to enrich the Irish history in different critical junctures. His homage concludes with a pledge to contribute to his nation and culture as a poet and a patriot by proving true to all that gifts inherited by him.

... I have nothing but a book,

Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine.(line 21-22)

In the poem *The Grey Rock*, Yeats makes a wistful appraisal of his camaraderie with fellow peers of the Rhymer's Club(such as Dawson and Johnson whom he held with reverence as ideal Irish bards and proudly emulated their styles); speculates on the theme of artistic ingenuity in the face of disruptive forces in the society and finally deals with the theme of betrayal and the sustaining power of artistic imagination expressed with the help of a mythical paradigm. The saga of betrayal meted out to Aoife, a rock-reared woman in Irish myth, (very similar to the character Ahalya in *The Ramayana* whose petrification incurred through the husband's curse came to an end at the touch of the holy feet of Sree Rama, the hero of the Indian epic) by a mortal man whom she loved and protected, provides not only a contrast to the theme of friendship but also, for a sensible reader, may gesture to an altered sub-text of the mortal poet's failed love affair with one (Maud Gonne) whom he looked upon as mortal woman indeed, yet with Hellenic attributes in terms of beauty and spirit. Now, Aoife's wail in the poem not only wrings out the sorrow that Yeats bore with him life-long but also voices as it were, the eternal tragedy of unfulfilled love: "Why should the faithfulest heart most love / The bitter sweetness of false faces?" (lines 113-14).

In the concluding part, the re-integration of the battered self of Aoife, wrought by the auspicious effect of 'Goban's wine' (symbolizing also artistic inspiration in the given context) that Gods drench Aoife with, and her statement to the Gods quoted below, serve as a parallel to the poet's commitment to maintain artistic integrity as an inherited legacy (which is a major theme in the poem) in the face of trials and tribulations:

I have kept my faith, though faith was tried,

To that rock-born, rock-wandering foot, ... (lines 125-26).

In the poem *September 1913*, prompted by a topical event viz, a lock out at Dublin due to a political hitch between the workers on the one hand and the merchants and shopkeepers comprising the middle class in the society on the other, the speaker sings a dirge on the symbolic death of 'Romantic Ireland' (in terms of collective consciousness), in a rhetoric of angst and scathing irony that hurls a dig at the conservative mindset of the Irish middleclass that ever compromised with the ideals set by altruistic figures such as O Leary, Edward Fitzgerald and Robert Emmet. The poet's angry reaction against the callous amnesia on the part of his contemporaries as regards the contribution of the icons mentioned, is unmistakable where he regrets the lack of public impact of the supreme sacrifices made by the martyrs.

Was it for this the wild geese spread

The grey wing upon their tide;

For this that all that blood was shed,

For this Edward Fitzgerald died, ... (lines 117-20).

This passionate outcry against such a pathetic insensitivity to the nation's interest, finds a parallel expression in a patriotic lyric named *Kandari Hushiyaar* (Beware, Ye Helmsman!) of Bengal's rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam where he critiques

the leaders of freedom struggle for being embroiled in unhappy conflicts over racial affiliations in a time of crisis.

Those martyred souls who sang on the scaffold,
The paean of life, have come unnoticed, to see
What return would you make, my patriots?
(Stanza VI, trans, lines 23-25) [6].

However, here in Yeats' poem, the speaker concludes as in the earlier one, with a note of hope that the maverick roles played by the stalwarts won't after all go in vain:

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were
In all their loneliness and pain, ... (lines 125-27).

The spirit of bitterness also spills over the poem *To A Shade* where the poet addresses and pays homage to the departed soul of Charles Parnell, the great Irish Nationalist and an exponent of Home Rule for the country whom the ingrate Dubliners didn't even stand by in time of his personal crisis. The Poet's sympathy also reaches out to Sir Hugh Lane, a celebrated Art Director who too, met the same fate as Parnell. A vituperative assault on corrupt culture rampant in the society that threatens to eat the vitals of nationalism, receives here a vitriolic expression in the concluding lines of the poem that are addressed to the shade: "You had enough of sorrow before death--/Away, away! You are safer in the tomb" (lines 25-26).

The question of old age and its attendant bliss and ills (such as disease, death and despair which constitute a major vein of Yeats poetry in the mature phase), receive a serene yet speculative treatment in the poem *The Three Hermits* where three old sages exhibit three distinct approaches to imminent death viz, – a fervid inclination of the first hermit to austerity measures like prayer and worship which are believed to entitle a soul to deliverance; a fatalistic acceptance of existence by the second which verges much on the Indian mystical concept of *PraraddhvaorKarmafala* ('We' are but given what we have earned' line 14) and lastly, an unconditioned acceptance of the sacrosanct nature of existence least bothered by metaphysics, a stance solely characterizing the third hermit who, 'Giddy with his hundredth year, /Sang unnoticed like a bird' (lines 31-32). Thematic novelty and precise nature of diction in this poem anticipate much of Yeats' mature poetry grouped under sections such as *The Tower* or *The Winding Stair*.

In the poem *The Magi*, one comes across the poet's imaginative perception of the Three wise men as representatives of whole humanity who under the upshot of a vision, though completely hoodwinked by a conspiracy hatched around the holy cross, waits expectantly for a miracle to take place in the 'bestial floor' which may specifically indicate the stable, or in a general sense, the modern-day world lacerated with greed and violence. The astute note of ambivalence in poetic tone and the pensive nature of experience in the seers much corroborates to the tone of Eliot's later day poem *The Journey of the Magi* which in turn was translated on request by Rabindranath Tagore in a poem titled *Tirthajatri* (*The Pil-*

grim) [14]. The ironic note of ambivalence in the last line of the poem – 'The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor' - looks forward to the masterful expression of a paradoxical disenchantment in the expression of the seers in Eliot's poem: "...this Birth was/Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death"(lines 38-39) [5].

Finally, the poem *A Coat* happens to be Yeats' manifesto as to his poetics and craftsmanship in his future poems which announces a total sifting of the meretricious from the abiding concerns of the poet. The poet's early reliance on Celtic mythology, legends and folk-tales as the stuff for his 'song' is befuddled at the experience of the emerging craze for commodification of art and culture and the growing trend of philistinism that value the outward luster, not the real worth of a poem or any other work of art. An outright, cynical rejection of embroidery in craftsmanship, held as an integral part of poetic art and the traditional expectation of greatness in poetic themes – receive a mordant assertion in the last lines of the poem which reveal a brutal honesty of expression with a befitting choice of diction – a trait which, with an all encompassing nature of poetic concern among other things, constitutes in the eyes of a careful reader, the poetic universe of Yeats as revealed in his later day poetry.

Song, let them take it,
For there is more enterprise
In Walking naked. (lines 8-10)

3. Conclusion

In art, if not in life, grand treatment of themes like failure, treachery, deception or despair may be far more impressive than those of happiness or ordinary success; yet both in art and life, expression of truth as the crux of experience, renders authenticity to the voice of the speaker. This centripetal nature of human experience, veering to the very roots, receives an astute poetic articulation (though with a conspicuous acerbity of tone expressed in the word 'wither') in a four line lyric titled *The Coming of Wisdom with Time*:

Though leaves are many, the root is one;
Through all the lying days of my youth
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun;
Now I may wither into the Truth.

Taking cue from the epigraph (chosen from a classic poem of Tagore dramatising a spiritual retreat from idealism to realism), one simply wonders to think how the different strands of bitter-sweet experiences which permeated the life of a young, visionary poet during the stormy period under discussion with soaring ideals about life, art and culture; now finally merge into a chiseled form of perception receiving the ablest and immaculate expression in the later day poetry of W. B. Yeats.

Yet this is not all. Whereas, truth for the Indian Poet-seer, 'a Vedic sage incarnate' [9] to Yeats, appears to be a philosophic reality to be experienced through Faith, amidst a harmonious bond of Humanity, nature and Love; for his Eu-

ropean counterpart, it lies in the balance between two contrary states of consciousness. Thus the poet's erstwhile passion to 'wither into the Truth' leads to a revelation of reality in the form of a central antinomy, the pattern of "Black and White" [7], permeating the very nature of human experience on earth:

Between extremities
 Man runs his course;
 A brand of flaming breath,
 Comes to destroy
 All those antinomies
 Of day and night;
 (Vascillation(I) Last Poems, lines 1-6)

Author Contributions

Arun Kumar Mukherjee is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

No Conflicts of Interest.

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