www.TLHjournal.com Literary Herald ISSN: 2454-3365
An International Refereed/Peer-reviewed English e-Journal
Impact Factor: 6.292 (SJIF)

My songs of old earth's dreamy youth: A re-reading of the Early Poetry of W. B. Yeats

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> Which dreams, indeed, are ambition,
> for the very substance of the ambitious is merely
> the shadow of a dream.
>
> **(Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act II, SC-II, Lines 276-78)**

Abstract

For readers in general, the poetry of W. B. Yeats forms a class apart in the history of English literature not simply because of the usual poetic accreditations typical of a Nobel laureate that he was, but chiefly for two reasons -- an astounding range of interests and most of all, for the way[s] he sought for all his life to make poetry his natural utterance that would integrate all sorts of feelings and emotions into a well-knit and convincing structure of experience. As the later poetry of Yeats admittedly displays an astonishing maturity both in terms of theme and technique, the early works of the poet are judged in common academic parlance, as at best enthusiastic renditions of romantic and pre-Raphaelite tendencies in a young visionary poet who nevertheless acknowledges through his works, poetry, love and Irish nationalism to be the practical passions of his life. The present article offers a selective study of the poet's early works coming under anthologies *Crossways*, *The Rose* and *The Wind among the Reeds* to trace some rudimentary traits that foreshadow the titanic stature that the poet was to attain in time yet retaining all along (often with a fair measure of justification), the dream of making his poetry into the symbol of a 'Unity of Being.'

Keywords: Range of interest, Natural utterance, Romantic tendencies, Unity of Being

In the poetry of William Butler Yeats, the readers admittedly experience a surprising assortment of interests which accommodate the poetic experiments of three distinct yet successive phases- the romantic, late Victorian, and modern era of English poetry. Broadly speaking, Yeats' poetic oeuvre can be divided into four categories --- the early phase embodying the Celtic Twilight, the realistic middle period marked by disillusionment, the magnificent *Tower* phase marked by a resplendent richness and complexity in theme and technique, and finally the tragic–ironic Last phase that posits a grand re-perspectivization of the chosen themes and experiences on the part of a conscious artist who has ever sought, often with surprising success, to weave thoughts and

feelings into an emotive body of experience without ever compromising with the delicate shades and nuances of feelings that claim a poet's attention. Yeats' poetics is thoroughly characterized by a central note of ambivalence which again, because of some striking complexity in his character and personality, makes his poetry an out and out intricate, yet engaging experience somewhat necessitating a studied response on the part of the readers.

The early poems of W. B. Yeats are characterized by a dreamy escapism, a strong sense of nostalgia, an astute evocation of romanticism that suggests a bucolic retreat of the human soul into the beauty and bliss of nature with an overbearing poetic urge for finding the perfect verbal and rhythmic idiom for experience. The first poem in the anthology *Crossways*, *The Song of The Happy Shepherd*, projects a perfect setting which silhouetting the unwelcome changes wrought by time – the transition from the regal times to the ribald, ("Where are now the warring kings?/ An idle word is now their glory', lines.13-14), as it were teaches the persona the sacred and transmuting power of the 'Word' at every stage of human experience - 'Words alone are certain good' (line 10). The ephemeral nature of the world and human exploits, the paean of which only sounds as 'a sudden flaming word', impinges the subjective nature of truth to be traced under the façade of external grandeur of so called 'reality': --

Then nowise worship dusty deeds,
Nor seek, for this is also sooth,
To hunger fiercely after truth,
Lest all thy toiling only breeds,
New dreams, new dreams; there is no truth
Saving in thine own heart.' (lines 22-28)

Interestingly, the quest for truth is marked by a constant presence of 'dream' – be it while 'the endless reverie' troubled by a 'moment' of revelation about olden days, or on the eve of realization about 'truth' as quoted above. Now for the happy shepherd, it is 'joy' (like 'ananda' one of the three essentials of Hindu philosophy other than 'Sat' or true and 'Chit' meaning 'consciousness') that initiates him to the mystique of nature and here, dreaming and singing are acknowledged to be perfect allies for poetic imagination/ celebration. The following excerpt reads like an exhortation of an unwavering faith in nature that alone reserves the trick of imparting the vision of truth in a happy soul who being able to segregate the authentic from the ornamental and become the raconteur of the past to sing 'songs of old earth's dreamy youth' :

Go gather by the humming sea
Some twisted, echo harbouring shell,
And to its lips thy story tell,
And they thy comforters will be ,
Rewording in melodious guile
Thy fretful words a little while ,
Till they shall singing fade in ruth

And die a pearly brotherhood. (lines 36-43)

The idea of telling story to an 'echoing 'shell' of the sea that envisions the discovery of 'a pearly brotherhood' suggestive of a reciprocity of feelings and emotions, flashes the gift of romantic imagination that enables one to envision the ocean in a droplet of water, or to visualize the sea in a conch, to put it another way. The poem further spells out much of the practical passions in Yeats' life – to make poetry a natural utterance with dream and singing of life as constituent parts.

Another moving lyric *The Sad Shepherd* is a sequel to *Happy Shepherd* yet with an antithetical bias, characteristic of Yeats' poetics. Here the shepherd bard lacks as it were, the inner fount of beauty and harmony within, much reminiscent of Coleridge's *Dejection: An Ode* and as such, the external opulence in nature fails to comfort the soul 'whom sorrow named his friend.' The speaker's repeated appeals to the stars, *Dim* sea, dew drops for being partners of his sorrow become foiled - 'The sea swept on and cried her old cry still/ Rolling along in dreams from hill to hill' (lines 10-11). Interestingly, the quality of dream is so pervasive – both in nature (hills) and the onlooker ('of his high comrade Sorrow dreaming'). But whereas it is the 'joy' that connects the outer order of experience with the inner pattern as in the case of happy shepherd so that the singing of experience to the 'echo-harbouring shell' creates a symphony, in the case of the sad shepherd, the speaker's choice of the same shell to utter his 'own words, re-echoing' with an intention of warming his way into a 'pearly heart', fails miserably for want of joy -- the connecting link. Hence, the melancholy strain on the part of the sad dreamer only turns into some indistinct, pensive sound bereft of any beatific prospect.

Then he sang softly nigh the pearly rim;
But the sad dweller by the sea-ways lone
Changed all he sang to inarticulate moan … . (lines 25-27)

Taken together, these two poems focus on the typical romantic strain of Yeats' early poetry that stresses among other things, on the subjective value of expression, the poetic importance of dream and the search for the perfect rhetoric to articulate the delicate nuances of feelings.

The poem *Ephemera* enacts the swift passage of love on the panorama of life and the meticulous details of the scenario offer a perfect objective correlative for the waning love between the speaker and his beloved, or, to be specific, between Yeats and Maud Gonne in real life. In reply to the speaker's detection of the waning love in the weary eyes of the beloved, the latter, much in the fashion of the lover in Browning's lyric *Last Ride Together*, though in a defeatist yet realistic way, suggests for an objective verification of their lot in nature and standing at the border of a lake recognizes the change coming over them:- 'how far away the stars seem, and how far/ Is our first kiss, ….'(lines 9-10). With the weakening of passion over time ('the poor tired child, Passion falls asleep'') paradoxically age comes apace ('… and ah, how old my heart!'). The

antithesis between the extremes of experience – passion and age -- finally merges into a sort of acquired equipoise in the speaker and the ephemeral in the speaker's vision, now reserves for them a glimpse of the perennial in so far as reflecting the constant dynamic of human relationship which consists of conflicted affiliations such as love and hatred. The following lines superbly convey the upshot of vision where experiences of the self transcend the limits imposed by finitude into matured reflections of love, which are rather the prerogatives of the Soul. The consolatory last part of the poem addressed by the speaker to his depressed partner, notwithstanding its lyrical fervor and an arresting simplicity of diction, can hardly conceal the thematic magnitude of complex psycho-dynamic theories (including love-hate relation) elaborated by experimental psycho-analysts like Freud and Jung and in the fitness of Yeatsian poetics, reality of experience (here love in the context) lies in the tension between two ideal opposites and the poetic intent receives an unequivocal expression in the last line of the excerpt below:

'Ah, do not mourn,' he said,
'That we are tired, for other loves await us ;
Hate on and love through unrepining hours,
Before us lies eternity; our souls
Are love, and a continuous farewell.' (lines 22-26)

The complexity of thought has a faint semblance to the tension between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, but here the poet's synthetic vision of an existence combining the alternatives, receives a similar poetic rehearse in a love lyric by a famous Bengali poet Jibanananda Das named *Tomay Ami* (Me addressing to You) where the speaker acknowledges the ephemeral nature of existence as unstable as a silvery drop of water tottering on the lotus-leaf; but draws consolation from the fact that neither the leaf, (even though imagined as the beloved and providing as the feminine self, the matrix of love for the lover) nor the water drop (the speaker) is separable from each other and they by merging, seek to forge some fixity amidst the flux of life.

I love you… hence, I
Fear to live as a dewdrop,
To taste a drop of water on your lap.
I Wish to merge within you
As the body merges with the soul.
(Das lines 11-15 *translation mine*)

The evocation of a similar sort of romantic refuge, projecting a space of untainted natural beauty and joy; suggestion of a return to nature for the strife-torn human soul – all these receive an eloquent treatment in the poem *The Stolen Child*. This poem perfectly reflects the mind set of young Yeats -- solitary, dreamy, passionate and avid for initiation into the secrets of the eerie and fairyland that were famed over generations to have inhabited the country Sligo and Knocknarea

reachings – the favourite haunts of young Yeats. The familiar Irish landscape with proverbial antinomies -- 'the rocky highland of Sleuth Wood' and 'a leafy island' connected by a lake, a playfield of herons and otters -- seem to be the abode of fairies that lures the Man-child into the mysteries of nature away from the fever and fret of mundane existence where, the potentials of suffering in store for one, appear to be increasingly hideous when compared to the divine bliss in the supposed fairyland. The call of the spirits used as a refrain at three consecutive stanzas of the poem is marked by a superb lyrical grace with an incantatory charm.

> Come away, O human child!
> To the waters and the wild
> With a faery, hand in hand,
> For the world's more full of weeping than you
> can understand. (lines 9-13)

The fairies' call continues and the second stanza as it were presents the witchery of elfin spirits, much reminiscent of the weird sisters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but here in an altogether positive light in so far as they conjure a healing atmosphere with their dancing hand in hand and the kind of mystic acts in playing with /cleansing the bubbles of water in the lake. The refrain is preceded by celestial intuition of the human condition: 'While the world is full of troubles / And is anxious in its sleep' (lines 23-24).

The last part of the poem is significant in a number of ways. Though the Man-Child is finally lured into the world of beauty away from the realistic world, he is detached from the natural warmth of lived experience as enumerated by his elfin rescuers:

> The solemn eyed:
> He'll hear no more the lowing
> Of the calves on the warm hillside
> Or the kettle of the hob
> Sing peace into his breast, … . (lines 46-50)

With an apparent look of a fabular message, the poem gives in a way of prolepsis, the hint of some of the major poetic concerns of Yeats that receive the fullest treatment in his later poetry. For a person who sought to envisage a "Unity of Being' as a man and an artist all through his career and whose poetic consciousness always follows a pattern of black and white, acceptance of celestial bliss to the exclusion of human feelings though with weeping as the major constituent passion, would surely be making the worse of a bad bargain!

The poem *Down By The Sally Gardens* is like *Ephemera*, another love poem of Yeats which articulates the saga of unrequited love (for Maud Gonne). But what is significant is that though lacking much of the thematic complexities and matured craftsmanship characterizing Yeats' later day love poems like *Adam's Curse* or, say, *No Second Troy*, one can easily detect here the faint heart-sob of a poor soul for a failed relationship that practically serves to form a cornerstone of Yeats' poetry. In the poem, the beloved's philosophic advice to the speaker at the primary stage of relationship- 'to take love easy, as the leaves grow on the trees'—provides no consolation to

the 'young' and 'foolish' lover who refuses to mature. As a result, when failure comes, the partner's endearing gesture of consolation further whets the pain in the lover leading to a sheer inability to cope:

> And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
> She bid me take life easy , as the grass grows on the weirs;
> But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears. (lines 6-9)

Compared to the final stance to experience and the note of acceptance in the poem *Ephemera*, the ending in *Sally Gardens* may appear to be more personal than philosophic; but what is most remarkable is that this subdued tone of pathos in these early poems are sure indications of what Yeats later acknowledges to be a dominant feature of his love lyrics; where the utterance of the speaker-lover has sufficient clarity to be eavesdropped by readers as is confessed in the closing part of Yeats' celebrated piece *Adam's Curse*:

> I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
> That you were beautiful, and that I strove
> To love you in the old high way of love;
> That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
> As weary hearted as that hollow moon. (Yeats lines 35-39)

Poems published under *The Rose* section mark a further advance in the growth of the poet both in terms of theme and style. The 'Rose' conjoined with the 'Cross' was a symbol of mystical beauty in the Hermetic society of Ireland called *The Golden Dawn* of which, both Yeats and Maud Gonne happened to be members, as pointed out by critic Bhabatosh Chatterjee in his book *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats*. Now, speaking generally in the context of Yeats' love lyrics and patriotic poems in the early phase, the Rose overall, works as a multiplex symbol – primarily of romantic love (with Maud Gonne) and Ireland which, resplendent with a rich artistic and cultural heritage, is to be re-born after some periodic eclipse in Yeats' dream; of the esoteric or the mystic; of spiritual or eternal beauty which however is not without a tinge of the complexity of human relation as if giving credence to the fact that 'Rose' in real life can't exist without thorns.

The poem *To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time* serves a prefatory purpose to attune readers to the poetic concerns in the poems under the section. The very first line of the poem is also the last line and this simply spells out the two uppermost concern of Yeats throughout his career - his failed relation with Maud Gonne and his dream of an Irish cultural revival. The qualities associated with the rose are different as the markers of change in experience but the difference is acknowledged by the young poet at every stratum of his living experience: "Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!"

Interestingly, whereas the Rose with its reddish hue may initially stand for romantic attraction for the speaker lover, the same Rose may feel proud of its distinction and dignity among flowers (as Maud Gonne might have, in public life), but the baffled hope and imagination makes the Rose in the speaker's mind sad and significantly, this last stage of experience do not assume as the potent form of reality for the speaker who instead, seeks to embrace the totality of experiences and this urge becomes prominent in the closing phrase – 'of all my life.' For a careful reader, this quest to address the totality of experience is much anticipatory of Yeats' declared motto as a poet in his mature phase – of finding a 'Unity of Being', already mentioned in the paper. Like Keatsian pattern of permanent beauty trapped in the fleeting nature of experience, here too, the persona seeks to trace the qualities of Rose in every crust of experience - in public and finally private space as he utters- 'Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways'…(line 2). The moments of grandeur and sacrifice of mythical heroes exude grace and charm like the rose but the tragic gloom of the mythical world is transposed on the personal world of the poet – the world of love where Maud Gonne seems an anachronistic breed with a rare combination of classical beauty and grace that sets her apart from the world of commoners (the theme elaborated in *No Second Troy*) and in this context, the sad Rose becomes a perfect symbol for the poet's predicament and his reverent recounting of mythic parables finally leads to his stoical stance to personal experience while the poetic self is able to trace the common element of greatness in either condition.

> Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;
> The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured , quiet-eyed
> Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;
> And thine own sadness, whereof stars, grown old
> In dancing silver-sandalled on the sea, … .
> Sing in their high and lonely melody. (lines 3-8)

Whereas the shadows of life and death play on the branches of Wordsworth's Yew tree in Borrowdel or Taru Dutt's Casurina stands for the intersection between life and death, mortality and immortality, for a modern poet like Yeats, the symbolic richness of the Rose confers a different kind of permanence upon the tree with the transfixion of arch disparates, (as characteristic with Yeats) and also attains a sort of transcendence in its own way: "Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,/I find under the boughs of love and hate, … " (lines 9-10). However, the evanescent nature of experience shows the recurrence of the permanent form of beauty as has been stated earlier: "In all poor foolish things that live a day,/ Eternal beauty wandering on her way" (lines 11-12).

The desire for proximity with the Rose (most probably with Maud Gonne, the most dominant yet, from the aesthetic viewpoint, a creative obsession for the young, reflective, love-lorn poet in his youth), the urge for 'the rose –breath' is expected to have a transformative impact upon the speaker and here too, one detects a clear antithetical pattern of thought that reaches a rich climax in the later poetry of Yeats. The 'rose- breath' would intoxicate the speaker with a strong

penchant for an initiation into the mythical ways of the world and of truth which would inspire the poet to produce something of a heroic magnitude hitherto unexplored:

> But seek alone to hear the strange things said
> By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
> And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know. (lines 19-21)

However, the fascination for the heroic which is after all, utterly unknown, has its cost -- the eschewal of the known mundane experience which the speaker consciously repudiates.

> Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
> The weak worm hiding down running by me in the grass,
> And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass; (lines 15-17)

Under the thralldom cast by the multi-dimensional Rose, the speaker however leaves the question unresolved as to how far divine ignorance is preferable to worldly wisdom!

The poems *Fergus And The Druid* and *Cuchulain's Fight With The Sea* recount Gaelic legends where the tragic saga of separation, betrayal and death is balanced with the themes of wisdom, sacrifice and renunciation which not only stimulate the young poet with ideals of halcyon days of Ireland but also succours to his dream of an Irish cultural revival with the realization of classical beauty and spirituality – the qualities which in a rarefied state perhaps coalesce in the symbol of the Rose.

The Lake Isle of Innisfree is a splendid example of the poetics of Young Yeats which is characterized by a fervid romantic imagination, a moving escapism into a dreamland conjured by natural beauty and bliss and above all, a fascinating sense of nostalgia with a Shelleyan faith in 'a devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow… .'' Probably under the influence of Thoreau's *Walden*, as pointed out by Norman Jeffares, the young poet 'dreamt of living alone in search of wisdom'(209) in Innisfree, an actual island in Sligo, Ireland. What Byzantium posed for the poet in the last phase of his career as a metaphor for his coveted 'Unity of Being,' Innisfree for the young poet whose mind by now has fed upon the world of mysticism and love, resplendent with the glimmer of mythic realism in the past and the dream of a beatific future, is now an ideal retreat in search of peace and wisdom.

Interestingly, the stoical acceptance of refusal in love as detected towards the end of poem *Ephemera* by now has led to an urge for escaping into an ideal state of existence amidst the bliss and beauty of nature which alone can entitle a dedicated soul to the world of mysticism – a stance somewhat similar to that of Wordsworth. The opening lines uphold the poet's ardent desire for such a space which might be pregnant with untapped treasures of mystic experience and this conjecture gains ground with the mention of the mystic number 'nine.': "Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee, /And live alone in the bee-loud glade"(lines 3-4). Whereas joy creates the romantic world as in case of Coleridge's *Dejection* ode, for Yeats it's Peace that descends with the dawn in the world of romantic imagination which being free from the dictates or laws of the natural world, is compact with a celestial light all the day:

… peace comes dropping
slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket
sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.(lines 5-10)

The treatment of the mystic quality of time trickling from morning to night in Innisfree island has a close parallel to Jibanananda Das's treatment of nature in rural Bengal in his patriotic lyric *Abar Asibo Phiri* (*I Shall Come Back Again*).

I shall come again in this Bengal at the bank of river *Dhansiri*
May be, not as a man, may be, in the guise of a Kite or a Shalik,
May be as a crow, announcing the dawn during *Nabanna* in *Kartik*,
Shall land, sailing on the wings of fog, in the shade of the jack-fruit tree.
(*Selected Poetry*, P. 42 *translation mine*)

The poet's imaginative recapturing of the 'water's lapping with low sounds by the shore' marks a typically romantic note reminiscent of Taru Dutt's Casurina Tree in her poem of same name and Michael Madhusudan Dutt's poem *Kapotaksha River* where, even being stationed in far off lands, the speakers as if hear in their dreams the wheezing sound of the casurina tree in the former's ancestral garden in Calcutta and the murmuring sound of the river flowing through the native village of the latter, respectively.

The potent reality of Innisfree as an idealized space of beauty has some sort of similarity to Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey but whereas in Wordsworth's case nature or the actual remains alive in memory with the abiding effect being retrospective in essence at least in the given context; for Yeats, the experience projected is thoroughly prospective in dimension and also pregnant with an ulterior bliss. The closing stanza of the poem is sonorous with the lilt of musical thoughts and mystic thrills:

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core. (lines 11-14)

Some shorter lyrics in the *Rose* section like *The Pity of Love*, *The Sorrow of Love* and *When You are Old* present only tonal varieties of the heart-sob of the young poet for failure in love which though quelled somehow under his various thematic concerns, claims like every other aspect, a voice from the poet who dreams life-long to make poetry a natural utterance. A steady progression in thought and style with a deliberate mixing of the crisp and the casual, the vital and

the volatile, as markers of maturity in technique, characterize these poems. Here the basic acknowledgement of the vanity of things to be most prominent in the pity 'hid in the heart of love' (*Pity of Love*, line 2) leads to the recognition of a tragic pattern that renders a classical dimension to human sufferings caused by the havocs of love as found in the following excerpt from *The Sorrow of Love*.

A girl arose that had mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears
Doomed like Odysseus and the laboring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers; (lines 5-8)

The odyssey on the part of the frustrated speaker steering clear through the mess of sycophants around Maud Gonne, ultimately leads to a revelation typical of his predicament in the poem *When You Are Old.*

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face,… .(lines 5-8)

The poem *The White Birds* is quite similar to *Ephemera* in theme – a wistful projection of the pathos of unfulfilled love in the perfect backdrop where the fleeting beauty of nature parallels the dwindling nature of human experience (love). But here, interestingly, the speaker, with his allegiance to imaginary islands of fairies ('Danaan shores') famed to be free from the whirligig of time; enacts an imagined transmigration of their souls which would avert mortality and sorrow and act as a countermeasure against finitude:

For I would we were changed to white birds on the wandering
Foam: I and you!
//
For I would we were changed to white birds on the wandering
Shore,
Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come near
Us no more; … . (lines 15-20)

A brilliant evocation of romantic atmosphere -- with luminous bodies merging with dew drops to fall along the margin of the sea amidst the elfin light of the dusk providing the ideal setting for the white birds to swim, being forgetful of Time -- show that watermark of romantic poetry where a white-hot dazzle of imagination is welded to acutely sharpened sensibilities.

This poem of Yeats has a close parallel in Jibanananda's celebrated piece *Ami Jodi hotam Banohongso* (I wish I were a Wild Swan) where the speaker draws a similar picture articulating a consciousness that offers a glimpse of fixity (love) amidst the flux of life.

There would be no death in piecemeal in today's life,
No scrap of broken dreams or of darkness;
If I were a wild swan and you, a wild goose
Floating along the fringes of river *Jalsiri*
Near the paddy field by the skyline … . (Das lines 23-27 *translation mine*)

Another poem *The Two Trees* begins with the theme of subjective theory of creation as enunciated in Coleridge's *Dejection* Ode as here the persona ascribes all the beauties in the exterior such as -- 'the trembling flowers', 'the changing colours of the fruit' and 'the stars with merry light' – to the Holy Tree in the heart of the beloved which is succoured by 'joy.' But whereas the romantic bard gropes for the lost joy within him (which once gave motion to the spheres) and now impotently looks at the external storm which leaves no impact upon his soul, his modern counterpart manages to feel instinctively the 'joy' in the beloved and makes it an occasion for a poetic tribute to her as he confesses his debt: " And made my lips and music wed,/Murmuring a wizard song for thee, …" (lines 11-12). The poet's silent imputations on the beloved's (ie, Maud Gonne's) radical involvement into the actual world in the form of a mild warning as quoted below sound to be much anticipatory of one of Yeats' major poetic concerns such as,-- rigid (or often heroic) intransigence of purpose that often prove too costly in terms of human warmth in relations or life's simple, natural expectations; -- a theme receiving richer treatment in wider contexts, in his famous poems like *Easter 1916* or *September 1913* at a later date. Here, the cautionary tone behind the anxiety of the love-lorn poet becomes too explicit to be missed.

Thine eyes grow full of tender care:
Beloved, gaze in thine own heart.
//
Gaze no more in the bitter glass
The demons with their subtle guile,
Lift up before us when they pass, … . (lines 19-23)

The poem *To Ireland In Coming Times,* the last one of section *The Rose*, records the poet's vision of the Irish cultural revival and his role in it as a rhyming peer of historical figures like Davis, Mangan and Ferguson who sought to envision Irish nationalism in their respective métiers. Now, in the making of a revived Ireland which he terms as 'A Druid Land,' the poet insinuates at his greater contribution than that of other poets or writers in respect of his reification of the spiritual /mystical truths of experiences in poetic terms along with exploring cultural roots of his motherland—in simple words, in dealing with the abiding by sifting the meretricious: "My rhymes more than their rhyming tell/ Of things discovered in the deep,"… (lines 20-21). The speaker is willing to contribute to the cause of Ireland with everything he feels to be –"While still I may, I write for you/The love I lived, the dream I knew"(lines 33-34). However, the speaker is hopeful for an enduring fame to be reflected in the mirror of truth which would show the bare, unbiased face of reality – hopefully, the speaker's sincere service to the nation as a poet:

In truth's consuming ecstasy,
No place for love and dream at all;
For God goes by with white footfall.
I cast my heart into my rhymes, … (lines 42-45).

The poems grouped under *Wind Among the Reeds*, focusing the familiar background of love, loss, regret; a recuperative urge for renewal in the light of the haunting beauty of the past and an ingrained faith in some miraculous possibilities of magic; show a distinct shift towards some strenuous maturity in theme and technique. Irish myth and folk-lore here continue to produce an occasional pitch of some heroic note, side by side with the subdued tone of melancholy already set in the lyre of Yeats' poetic imagination owing to his unhappy experiences relating to love and his homeland. The title of this section shows a breath-taking similarity with a line in the poem *Haat* (The Market place) by a powerful 20th century Bengali poet Jatindranath Sengupta who relates the desolate, nocturnal look of the Market place which throbbed with brisk activities throughout the day in this way.

The wind passes through the reeds
of broken poles standing alone in the dark,
only to play an ironic tune,
To mock the destiny of the dead *Haat*!
(Dasgupta lines 11-12, *translation mine*)

The diversity in the nature of themes such as activity and withdrawal, the irony embedded in the nature of life's experience, hectic transactions in the materialistic level mocked by Time as touched in Sengupta's poem – mark some of the basic issues tackled by Yeats, or to be generic, by many others though in varying means and modes of expression.

The poems of this group such as *The Hosting of the Sidhe* and *The Host of the Air* are steeped in the spirit of supernatural atmosphere enveloping Irish myths and folktales. The former dramatizes the majestic descent of elfin deities like Caoilte ('tossing his burning hair', line 3) to survey the land of the mortals with Niamh whose song as if tantalizes mortals with a hypnotic charm of the fairyland -- the issue readers have experienced in the poems already discussed: "Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are agleam,/Our arms are waving, our lips are apart…"(lines 8-9).

The poem *The Host of the Air* also enacts a supernatural experience in dream. A lover perhaps dreaming of his beloved (much reminiscent of the lover/speaker in Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*), notices amidst darkness, a celestial spot of light inhabited by young men and girls including his beloved Bridget ('With a sad and gay face' line- 16), dancing to the sweet tune played by a piper. But soon the spell being broken, the phantasmagoria flits into the air leaving behind only a feeling of some lost love and aborted hope. Norman Jeffares points to the original story in a Gaelic legend where the husband finds the keeners keening for his wife when he gets home. *The Song of Wandering Aengus* spells under the garb of mythic parable and magical rites, the tragic tale of unrequited passion of Aengus for a mysterious girl though the passion for erotic adventure is under pledge to continue unstinted for eternity.

I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among the dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done…. .(lines 19-22.)

Aengus's projected odyssey on the legendary plane may parallel man's insatiable quest for the unknown but the analogy is more pertinent in the realistic context of Yeats' defeatist passion for Maud Gonne throughout his life which makes his whole poetry also an excruciating personal experience apart from all other artistic features.

Taken overall, these four poems read as parts of the imaginative excursions of the young poet into the world of myth, mystery, love and romance while the mind being soaked in dream yet, seeks to counter the emerging reality not consistently savory one for a dreamy, passionate youth that the poet is.

A group of lyrics offering variations of feelings on the dwindling character of love- experiences however shows a mature technique of the poet in incorporating wider frames of thought such as the conflict between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, flux and fixity etc. etc. What is clearly discernible is that, love as a theme is sometimes treated within a broader context of reference and understanding than merely recording heart-sob in a gorgeous rhetoric of pity that characterized Yeats' earlier poems. For example, the poem *He Bids His Beloved Be At Peace* communicates almost an epical setting that serves as the backdrop to silhouette the passage of time, love and life all of which merge in the irrevocable course of eternity: " O vanity of Sleep, Hope, Dream, endless Desire,/ The Horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy clay… "(lines 7-8). Caught in the eddies of an irreversible process of doom that enmeshes all, the speaker, much in the fashion of the speaker in Browning's poem, tries to find a moment of stasis in love amidst the whirls of change.

Beloved, let your eyes half close, and your heart beat
Over my heart, and your hair fall over my breast,
Drowning love's lonely hour in deep twilight of rest,
And hiding their tossing manes and their tumultuous feet. (lines 9-12)

Another lyric *He Remembers Forgotten Beauty* encapsulates a retrospective and wistful recapturing of the lost royal beauty, a Hellenic kind for which Maud Gonne was a model for Yeats. The speaker's love undimmed by the fading nature of glamour recalls annals of history marked by human experience of passion, betrayal, dream and denial as recorded from time to time.

…. The loveliness
That has long faded from the world;
The jeweled crowns that kings have hurled
In shadowy pools, when armies fled; (lines 2-5)

But the kind of love forgotten in the public eye, paradoxically triggers forth a *palimpsest* of impressions constituting the history of love in the vision of the speaker.

> For hours when all must fade like dew,
> But flame on flame, and deep on deep,
> Throne over throne where in half sleep,
> Their swords upon their iron knees,
> Brood her high lonely mysteries. (lines 20-24)

Some other poems like *He hears the Cry of the Sedge*, *The Travail of Passion* , *He Wishes his Beloved were Dead* and *He Wishes for the cloth of Heaven* mark a sinuous advance in the poetic rendition of a failed love where a fervid imagination merge with a white-hot passion that being thwarted, fret in the blind alley of ambition. In the first poem of the tetra logy, the pathetic cry of the mythical bird Sedge, an European counterpart of the *Nuyai* of India's North-east, seems to voice the sorrow of lost love which for the lover as if (much reminiscent of the reflections in Shakespeare's Macbeth triggered by his plan regicide), stands for the collapse of the universe,.

> Where wind cries in the sedge:
> Until the axle break
> That keeps the stars in their round… . (lines 3-5)

The saga of a towering passion desperately seeking fruition in vain through its labyrinthine passage of experience receives a telling expression in *The Travail of Passion* where the depth and severity of suffering in the lovers as if recall images of pangs and sufferings in crucifixion.

> When the flaming lute-thronged angelic door is wide;
> When an immortal passion breathes in mortal clay;
> Our hearts endure the scourge, the plaited thorns, the way
> Crowded with bitter faces, the wounds in palm and side, …(lines1-4)

The sinewy strength of Yeats's mature poetry stripped of meretricious ornamentation , the colloquial thrust , the quality of a devastating honesty in expression that among other things form the emotional spine of Yeats's best poetry ; as if receives an astute, early, pre-date expression in the poem *He Wishes for the cloth of Heaven.* The speaker's adulatory approach to love ('Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths,' line 1), leads to his vain wish to dedicate the same to his unkind goddess (' I would spread the cloths under your feet' line 5).

But the ironic clench in the closing lines quoted below addressed to the lady love (Maud Gonne?) not only encapsulate the pangs of a heart worn out for a 'barren passion's sake' (as he confesses in the poem *Responsibilities*, line 19) but also silently imputes the petrified self in the beloved, the thought of which receives a deeper treatment in another seminal piece of the poet *Easter 1916* as already discussed:

> But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
> I have spread my dreams upon your feet;

Tread softly because you tread on my dreams. (lines 6-8)

Taking cue from the epigraph, one simply wonders to think how an avid dreamer like Yeats who, being a young bard once believed solely in the power/ world-creating dimension of words ('Words alone are certain good') as the concomitants to dream, could build up a complex poetic world where the corrupt or gross form of reality is finally chosen to form the matrix of his art: "I must lie down where all the ladders start/foul rag and bone shop of the heart"(*Circus Animal's Desertion*, lines-39-40).

But interestingly, dream persists even now, constituting as if a major vein of poetic consciousness as one notices in the poem *The Man and the Echo*, written in 1938, (just before the poet's death), where the speaker seems to be engaged in a dialogue with his alter ego regarding the complex relation between a poet's personal intent and his public impact.

What do we know but that we face
One another in this place?
But hush, for I have lost the theme,
Its joy or night seem but a dream. (lines 41-44)

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