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PECULIAR FEATURES OF WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS' POETRY

Abstract: William Butler Yeats is widely considered to be one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. He was one of the modern poets, who influenced his contemporaries as well as successors. By nature he was a dreamer, a thinker, who fell under the spell of the folklore and the superstition of the Irish peasantry. He felt himself as stranger in the world of technology and rationalists. In this article sense of moral wholeness and humanity of a prominent poet is discussed. Through analysis of the poem "Sailing to Byzantium" Yeats' creative way, peculiarities of his style and interpretation of symbols, their connection with author's intellectual condition have been studied.

Key words: modern poetry, poetic sensibility, symbolism, mysticism, mythology, individual style, poetry analyses, interpretation of poetic images.

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Introduction

Yeats was the greatest poet in the history of Ireland and the most prominent poet to write in English during the twentieth century. His themes, images, symbols, metaphors and poetic sensibilities depict his personal and his nation's experience during one of its most troubled times. Yeats' great poetic feature was to recreate his own life, his thoughts, feelings, conclusions, dreams in his poetry. He rendered all of himself into his poetry. His elaborate style takes elements from Irish and Greek mythology, nineteenth-century occultism, English literature, European politics and Christian imagery. All these features would together depict his own experience and interpretive understanding.

Yeats is known for the contradictions in both his life and work, particularly between his romanticism and his modernism. He is considered as one of the last romantics, but he stands as a part of the modernist movement as well. His identification with Romanticism is evident in his work through elaboration of Irish myth and legend, the supernatural and pastoral themes. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is a poem that is connected to this period, where idealizes a small island of his youth as a place of escape.

As modernist author he adopted various schemes of rhythm, used demotic, strong language. The most

important of all, symbolic techniques and abundance of political themes instead of emotional testify his attachment to modernistic trend. The poem "Sailing to Byzantium" opens modernistic features of Yeats as rebellion against tradition and celebrated self-discovery.

Yeats wanted poetry to engage the full complexity of life. He was, from first to last, a poet who tried to transform the local concerns of his own life by embodying them in the universal language of his poems. His brilliant imaginative accomplishments, strengthened by his power of rhythm and poetic phrase, have earned wide praise from readers and, especially, from fellow poets.

Main part

Yeats started his long literary career as a romantic poet and gradually evolved into a modernist poet. When he began publishing poetry in the 1880s, his poems had a lyrical, romantic style, and they focused on love, longing and loss, and Irish myths. His early writing follows the conventions of romantic verse, utilizing familiar rhyme schemes, metric patterns, and poetic structures. Although it is lighter than his later writings, his early poetry is still accomplished. Several factors contributed to his poetic evolution: his interest in mysticism and the

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occult led him to explore spiritually and philosophically complex subjects.

The poetry of Yeats is permanent and enduringly popular, because it is more coherent, and more traditional than that of his other great contemporaries. His poetry deals with a variety of themes ranging from ancient legend, mythology, folklore, politics, history, love and constantly creates new myths of his own. His work is uniformly good and his creations are quite extensive and he writes with ease on themes adopted from every sphere of life. The sustained and continuous development of art and genius is the chief point in Yeats' poetry.

Yeats wanted to write realistic poems: poems as urgent and as uncluttered as a newspaper article. He even wrote a poem about his decision - "A Coat". But to see the difference between a traditional and a modernist poem from Yeats, it would be better to compare "He wishes for the cloths of heaven" with "The Second Coming". In the first poem a disappointed lover whines gracefully about how very sad he is. And in the second poem Yeats prophesies that fascism will be both an exhilaration and a disaster for Europe [1; 31].

The complexity and fullness of William Butler Yeats' life was more than matched by the complexity and fullness of his imaginative thought. There are few poets writing in English whose works are more difficult to understand or explain. The basic problems lie in the multiplicity of Yeats' own preoccupations and poetic techniques.

Yeats frustrated romantic relationship with Maud Gonne caused the starry-eyed romantic idealism of his early work. Additionally, his concern with Irish subjects evolved as he became more closely connected to nationalist political causes. As a result, Yeats shifted his focus from myth and folklore to contemporary politics, often linking the two to make potent statements that reflected political agitation and turbulence in Ireland and abroad. Finally, and most significantly, Yeats' connection with the changing face of literary culture in the early twentieth century led him to pick up some of the styles and conventions of the modernist poets.

The period of poetic activity in his case extended over fifty years, and during this long span of time he was constantly maturing and growing different from what he was at the beginning. There is no sudden change or break in continuity, but a slow evolution, and the seeds of the future are to be found in what has gone before. Moreover *The Collected Poems* where each poem lights up its predecessor and is in turn illuminated by its successor. All obscurities disappear if Yeats' poetry is read as a whole, and such reading gives an aesthetic pleasure, such as is derived from the writings of even a few of the greatest poets. [3;67] The poems for which he is famous, however even those which present difficulties of understanding are

masterpieces, transformations of the raw material of his art.

Analysis

One of the famous and priceless works of W.B. Yeats is the poem "Sailing to Byzantium". This poem is written in 1927. The poem is broken into four stanzas, each containing eight lines. There is a set rhyme scheme throughout the poem of *abababcc*. [4;56] Yeats wrote the poem in iambic pentameter, and there is a rhyming couplet at the end of each stanza.

Several critics have gone so far as to say that "Sailing to Byzantium" explains itself or needs no extensive clarification. But if it were actually such a case, it would not generate greatest amount of commentaries. The general reader would firstly ask inevitable question, "Why Byzantium?" Byzantium was an ancient city later named Constantinople, which is situated where Istanbul, Turkey, now stands. During his life the author has travelled there. And the impact of that voyage could inspire him to choose that city as the ideal imaginary place of his poem.

It starts with following lines:

That's no country for old man. The young
In one another's arm, birds in the trees,
- Those dying generations- at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect

He says that young people's generation is busy with unnecessary activities like birds which are singing about only love, not nature. Dying generation indicates cruel people who want only entertainment as birds are singing about only love, do not do other exercises. He says all of these men, women, waterfalls, fish, birds and all creatures are enjoying the summer with happiness. They are singing the songs of senses and beauty and joy. All creatures are bound to born and death. They are unable to escape the cycle of life. But the idea of the poet is that they all have neglected this process, because they are with sensual joys of beauties.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium

The poet starts with idea that old man is only busy with unnecessary smallest sings. But in our life business or another jobs are not important as real meaning of life. He compares the old man to *a worn out coat which is hanging on stick having no use*. Similarly, the old man has no use in this life and only

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destination that awaits him is death. The only available choice for the old man is being educated. Once his soul is educated he will sing and sing louder, because he will get the whole picture and true essence of life.

It is also interesting to consider when Yeats wrote this poem: he wrote it fewer than ten years before his death, which means he was an old man. This is important since the speaker in this poem feels he is not appreciated in his homeland due to his advanced age. Perhaps Yeats was feeling alienated from his society for the same reasons.

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

Now in the third stanza poet stands before a brilliant mosaic, arguing the Byzantine sages and "God's sacred flame" to enlighten his spirit. He understands that his heart is trapped inside an animal. The poet needs to leave this world and enter the universe of timeless symbolization through his melodic poetry.

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

In the fourth stanza Yeats has revoked his natural body. He would take the state of the brilliant fowl, the sort of winged animal which Grecian goldsmiths are accepted to believe. His melody, when he turns into a brilliant flying creature, will be that of profound euphoria. In Byzantium, he will have no age; past, present and future are every one of the one there.

The poem's real topic is the transformative force of artist; the capacity of craftsmanship to express the unutterable and to venture outside the limits of self. Some points of the poem may be interpreted personally, for example, the speaker's yearning to leave his nation, references to himself as an old man,

"a wear cover upon a stick", and showing at least a bit of kindness "debilitated with longing. The speaker feels the longing to cruise to Byzantium. He needs to change his awareness and find enchanted union with the brilliant mosaics of a medieval realm.

"Sailing to Byzantium" is a richly symbolic poem, it generates literal level as well. This poem can be considered as written in modernistic style. As here we may witness rebellion against tradition and celebrated self-discovery. This poem absolutely challenges poetic conventions and the literary traditions, and rejects the notion that poetry should simply be lyrical and beautiful.

Modernistic influences caused his poetry to become darker, edgier, and more concise. Although he never abandoned the verse forms that provided the sounds and rhythms of his earlier poetry, there is still a noticeable shift in style and tone over the course of his career.

Conclusion

In spirit and belief, Yeats remained romantic and imaginative as he lived on into the increasingly positivistic and empirical twentieth century. It was in form, not content, that he gradually allowed himself to develop in keeping with his times, although he didn't follow verse libre and never wholly relinquished his attachment to various traditional poetic modes.[3;83] In the direction of modernism, he adopted or employed at various times irregular rhythms, writing by ear, declaring his ignorance of the technicalities of conventional metrics, approximate rhymes, colloquial diction, most important of all, symbolic techniques much like those of the French movement, though not from its influence alone. His creativity, however, remained a certain romantic quality, what he called passionate, that remarkable gift for just the right turn of phrase to express emotional intensity or to describe impassioned heroic action.

Yeats wasn't just one of old conservative poets. He truly believed in the ability of old forms to modify themselves for the new challenges and possibilities of his modern world. After you read "Sailing to Byzantium," you'll see that this was a pretty huge theme in his poetry. Where Eliot and Pound broke down poetic form completely [3;87], Yeats tried to breathe new life into an aging shell.

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