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Dewdrops and the Dream: Corresponding Romantic Metaphors in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats

In view of the fact that William Butler Yeats wrote his most celebrated poems in the early twentieth century, he is most often considered as a modernist poet. Consequently, when a discussion of his Romanticism is involved, the critical attitude of some scholars generally regards him as some kind of an effete or decadent Romantic poet despite the rich qualities of Romanticism which his poetry offers. G. Wilson Knight, for example, has made an elaborate study of the poetry of vision in *The Starlit Dome* dwelling essentially on Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. Yet the title of Knight's work is evocative of some prominent lines of one of Yeats's most philosophical and visionary poems titled "Byzantium":

A starlit or moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities
The fury and the mire of human veins. (Yeats 280)

However, if Yeats's poem influenced Knight's choice of the subject matter and the parameters with which he set out to discuss the visionary poetics of the radical romantic poets, nothing is mentioned about Yeats from whom he borrows the title of his work. Furthermore, in his comprehensive analysis of the Romantic imagination, Maurice Bowra concludes somehow categorically that, "Within this period and afterwards there were no other poets whose conception of the imagination was quite this, and who though they may have much in common with the great five are not in agreement on the essential point" (271).

The period Bowra refers to is definitely the Romantic period (1798-1832) and the "essential point" which he states in a previous discussion is that the five major Romantic poets including Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, although they had their

differences, were unanimous on the major point that “the creative imagination is closely connected with peculiar insight into the unseen order behind visible things” (271).

Knight and Bowra seem to overlook the fact that although Yeats wrote principally in the twentieth century, his poetry is invested with the same rich and spiritually-profound values which urged and fashioned the imagination of the poets of the Romantic tradition through which he reaches out to that “unseen order behind visible things” in the “moonlit or starlit dome” of Byzantium, *i.e.* what Blake has called “Jerusalem” and Shelley “Everlasting Spring.”

An important feature of Romanticism is the source of inspiration most often identified with archetypal images like “sleep” in the case of John Keats, the “breeze” or “wind” as is the case with Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley. This source of inspiration is the main catalyst of what Bowra calls the “creative imagination.” Like Knight, Bowra ignores the fact that constant reference to “dewdrops” in Yeats’s poetry is a significant agent of the creative imagination attached to sleep and dream, as any other source of inspiration found in Romantic poetry. The attachment of creative imagination to certain features of Nature may be less explicit in Yeats’s poems because of the limited scope of his pantheism, which in Wordsworth is quite vast. But the idea of dewdrops comes up frequently in Yeats’s poetry as an agent of creative imagination through which perfect beauty, defined by the existence, the unity of being, peace, harmony, eternity and the sublimation of art, is attainable and by which means he perceives the mystery or spiritual forces that abound in the heart of the universe.

In his Nature poetry therefore, Yeats through the constant use of the “dew-dropping” metaphor imbibes a kind of Romantic phenomenon which associates certain objects or activities in Nature with the power of the inspiration or the imagination. Dewdrops in Yeats’s Nature poems engender sleep, not unlike in the works of John Keats whose prime agent of inspiration and the imagination is sleep. As Garrett Stewart writes: “In ‘Sleep and Poetry,’ Keats explores – and strategically blurs – the border of art and the unconscious, underpinned by the dream logic of words themselves” (138). Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley on the other hand, consider that the breeze, breath, or wind are responsible for activating their creative spirit.

Commenting on the poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron, M.H. Abrams notes that in their major poems, “the wind is not only a property of the landscape but also a vehicle for the radical changes in the poet’s mind” (37). To Yeats the dewdrop is an agent of inspiration, a spiritual inhabitant in Nature, and above all, it inspires the dream which is a metaphor not only for the imagination but also for the poetry of vision.

Therefore, in the context of the present critical theory, one would hesitate to consider dewdrops as an “archetypal metaphor” because it yields little of the universal signification which the breeze or breath, wind or respiration obtain in Romantic poetry. However, a closer view of Northrop Frye’s definition of the archetype reveals that an archetype may not be just a repetition of the same kind of image like the wind or the breeze but that other ideas, characters, narrative formula or images (such as dewdrops) “can be assimilated to a larger unifying category” (58). Seen from this perspective, archetypes become recurrent patterns in Literature that cut across social, cultural, racial, generation and geographical boundaries. Therefore, in the light of Northrop Frye, and of Maud Bodkin, the dewdrops that initiate the dream become a corresponding Romantic metaphor for inspiration and the imagination, not unlike the archetypal breeze or wind in the poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron. According to Clyde Kluckhohn, archetypal criticism should concern itself with relating the specific experiences of people to general or universal aspects of human experience, especially those which “result from recurrent reactions of the human psyche to situations and stimuli of the same general order” (46).

Many critics about the poetic imagination lay the stress on the imagination as the principal weapon of art. For Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge, imagination is the most important gift a poet can be endowed with because it enables him to re-enact God’s creation. Imagination, in their opinion, enables man to come into contact with ultimate reality and to attain an understanding of the oneness of things. In other words, it is the very source of spiritual energy which makes Romanticism, to use Marc Redfield’s expression, “remain a fundamentally ambiguous event in which we seem fated to participate as political and ethical beings” (100).

Yeats evidently subscribes to this view of the Romantics according to which the imagination is the only means by which one can attain transcendental reality, that realm beyond ordinary human apprehension where the beauty absent in the real world is present. Therefore, imagination for Yeats becomes a means of emancipating from any form of life that is not gratifying. Chastised by the flaws of social conventions and the artificiality of moral doctrines and philosophy, the protagonist of Yeats's poems searches through his imagination, realm after realm, some ideal life far away from reality. In his Nature poems consequently, Yeats deals with the mystifying, yet inspiring characteristics of Nature, which reinforces the beauty of his poetic artistry, especially as they provide him with abundant imagery which render his poetry more concrete.

Precisely, Yeats penetrates that realm of the imagination which resides in the natural landscape by virtue of the "dew-dropping sleep" so that the dew becomes a prominent feature in his landscapes. It is portrayed as possessing mystifying qualities because it is the prime agent of inspiration, as well as a weapon of the imagination. It is the power to turn to whenever the poet's creative power fails or is disturbed by images from the world of reality from which he wishes to escape:

O cloud-pale eyelids, dream-dimmed eyes,
The poets labouring all their days
To build a perfect beauty in rhyme
Are overthrown by a woman's gaze
And by the unlabouring brood of the skies:
And therefore my heart will bow, when dew
Is dropping sleep until God burn time,
Before the unlabouring stars and you.
(Yeats, "He Tells of Perfect Beauty" 74-75.)

The "perfect beauty" referred to in the lines above is poetic beauty represented by "rhyme," while the "woman's gaze" represents all forms of sensual indulgence which distract the persona from the art of versification. Because sensual indulgence seems to overrule the creative spirit, the poet appeals to this natural element to protect him. The poet's supplication to the dew-dropping sleep is evident in the phrase "my heart will bow." The phrase also suggests

that the “dew-dropping sleep” is a superior spirit capable of ordering human activities against the background of Nature.

The implication here is that the natural environment into which the poet escapes from the troubles of the real world wields a serious influence on the poet himself. It is only against this background that the poet’s creative spirits are enforced. Once in a natural environment, the dropping of the dew engenders sleep and dream which in Keatsian Romanticism are the sources from which poetry springs. The “cloud-pale eyelids,” and “dream-dimmed eyes” in the lines above respectively suggest sleep and dream.

The characteristic inducement of sleep and dream by the dropping of dew is overtly presented in “The Valley of the Black Pig”:

The dews drop slowly and dreams gather: unknown spears
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.
We who still labour by the Cromlech on the shore,
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,

Being weary of the world's empires bow down to you,
Master of the still stars and of the flaming door. (Yeats 73)

The opening line of the poem reveals the activity of the dew inducing sleep — “dews drop slowly and dreams gather.” “Dream” in this context is a symptom of the imagination as well as a metaphor for creative inspiration. In the poem the poet’s dew-drop-engendered dream is interrupted by a different factor. This time, it is not simply a “woman’s gaze” but the hurtling of spears, the clashing of fallen horsemen and the shattering of perishing armies. These images of destruction reiterate the ruthlessness of the real world, characterized by unreciprocated love, which on a biographical level evokes the frustrating relationship between Yeats and Maud Gonne, as well as the violent political conflicts in the 1916 uprising during the Irish quest for home rule. The poet’s desire to penetrate the realm of Nature through the imagination is also seen in his supplication, so evident in the words “bow” to the “dew-dropping sleep.” Bowing to the dropping dew again demonstrates the reverence which Yeats attaches to the dew as an agent of the inspiration and a mystifying spiritual force which can provide a means

of escape from the tortures of reality, or from what he implicitly means by being “weary of the world’s empires.” But of particular interest is the fact that as the “Master,” the dew controls the other elements of Nature like the stars and every other object which produces light. The “flaming door,” for example, stands out distinctively to connote the passage of light, vision or imagination through which one can perceive life beyond ordinary human apprehension, a world into which the poet seeks to escape.

A comparative analysis of the two poems, “He Tells of Perfect Beauty” and “The Valley of the Black Pig”, may be helpful in the understanding of Yeats’s dew-dream convention as a proper feature of creative imagination. Both poems have a similar structure with eight lines each, and also a similar rhyming pattern, which demonstrate the creative activity and poetic consciousness which the poet is involved in, especially when he invokes this creative muse. The first lines of both poems suggest the nature of the dream, followed in the following lines by the elements of disturbance which are all sources of Yeats’s desolation in the real world — that is infatuation and political violence. But most particularly in the third section of both poems does the poet seek the absolute power which initiates the dream. He bows to this power to illustrate the importance he attaches to dew-dropping as a metaphor for the creative imagination.

On the other hand, the dream-inducing characteristics of the “dew-drops” symbolise the link between tumultuous reality and the glorifying world of Nature. The reason is that the poet seeks its influence each time he is disrupted by the vices of reality in his reinstating his dream. In other words, dew-drops, which are themselves part of the natural environment, provide a means of escape into that dream dominion. Its activities provide as well a perfect setting for the imagination within the realm of Nature, through which force it is possible to evaluate and perceive the mystery that surrounds the environment.

In the context of Yeats’s Nature poetry, “Dew-drops” are then capable of providing peace, rest and love which are three main virtues absent in the world of reality, which the poem, “A Faery Song” illustrates perfectly. It is a song sung by the people of Fairyland over Diamuid and Grania in their bridal sleep under a Cromlech. Diamuid and Grania have come “new from the world”:

Give to the children, new from the world,
 Silence and love
 And the long dew-dropping hours of the night,
 And the stars above:

Give to these children, new from the world,
 Rest far from men.
 Is any thing better, anything better?
 Tell us it then (Yeats 43-44)

What is emphatic in the two stanzas of the poem is the appeal to the old generation of Faeries to provide peace, love and rest to Grania and Diamuid. It is assumed that they have left the physical world to enter a fairy world, seen against the background of Nature. They need peace, love and rest precisely because the physical world is one of unrest and desolation. The “dew-dropping hours” are among the three forces that are conjured for the provision of these values to the children from the world, including the poet himself. The other two include the faeries and “the stars above.” But the “dew-dropping hours of night” are invested with a familiar force which does not only engender sleep and dream, but peace, love and rest, values opposed to the ruthlessness of the old world, which is hinted at in the second stanza of the poem by the expression “far from men.”

However, the “dew-drops” do not become an all-desirable force in Yeats’s poetry. At times the poet rejects them when he thinks of or wishes for other values to be found in Nature. This is the situation in “The White Birds,” a poem in which the speaker expresses the wish that he and his beloved become like the swans which are rocked in the foams of the sea. Because of his fascination for the swans, he rejects the falling “dew” and the “lily” and “rose” and the blue stars which in other poems play major roles in cosmic unity:

A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew-dabbled, the lily and the rose
 Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the meteor that goes,
 Or the flame of the blue stars that lingers, hung low in the fall of the dew (Yeats 47)

“Dew” is rejected in the poem because it engenders dream and creates weariness. The weariness also comes from too much admiration of the “lily” and the “rose” which are noted for their immense beauty. It

comes as well from the desire to admire something different. The lily and the rose are referred to as “dreamers” because they are “dew-dabbled.” Here, the “dew-drops” are supposed to create the same effect both on Nature and on the poet who finds himself in a similar situation or environment. However, although the poet discards the “dew-drops” in order to admire the other riches of Nature represented by the “white birds,” the association of dream with “dew-drops” is once more evident.

Some of Yeats’s greatest romantic poems bring out the beauty of the natural environment which the poet perceives through the principal agents of sleep and dream induced by the dropping dew. The landscape is most often conjured up as composed of a few enduring elements like woods, thickets, pools, lakes, rivers, hills and valleys. One does not find in them the expanse of cultivated fields or cities. Yeats’s romantic environment is perceived ordinarily as simple, peopled by a few hermits and cottage dwellers. The landscape is familiar and imagination creates its own inhabitants to endow the landscape with the values the poet upholds. Perceived through the dewdrop and the dream metaphors, the world of nature is thickly populated by spiritual presences which assume multifarious vegetational or topographical forms, like the wind and the rose, supernatural beings and faeries.

The wind however is not very much exploited as an archetypal image of creative inspiration like in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” and in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*. Yeats rather portrays it as a force that is capable of ordering the activities of Nature as well as those of men. It is the principal force which the poet appeals to in “The Poet Pleads with Elemental Powers” to suppress the wild qualities of the beloved. It is viewed as a god — the “sidhe”— the Gaelic word for wind. In “The Hosting of the Sidhe,” the passing winds re-animate life within the confines of Nature — the leaves whirl, the hair is unbound, breasts heave, arms wave and new hopes hover in life.

In a contrary sense, the breath or wind in Yeats is also a destructive force, like in *The Old Testament* (Kings 19: 11 and Ezekiel 13: 13), symbolising the expression of God’s wrath, and in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind.” A number of Yeats’s “wind” poems illustrate this interpretation, like the wrath of the Gaelic wind gods reflected in “The Unappeasable Host” in which the wind generates total disorder:

Desolate winds that cry over the wandering sea;
Desolate winds that hover in the flaming West;
Desolate winds that beat the doors of Heaven and beat
The doors of Hell and blow many a whimpering ghost (Yeats 65)

The winds are desolate because they are ignored, being as they are spiritual forces. Their desolation reveals their wrath, explicit in their cry over the wandering sea, and in the way they beat the doors of Heaven and Hell.

It could be judged from the lines cited above that the winds are themselves evil. In "He Reproves the Curlew" the wind has the exceptional role of transmitting messages or sounds from other elements of Nature. The cry of the curlew is evil because it reminds the poet of his lost love, and the wind is interpreted as an unwelcome messenger since it transmits the evil cry of the curlew. The poet's aversion for this activity of the wind is recorded in a declarative statement in the poem: "There is enough evil in the cry of the wind."

However, apart from being a source of destruction, the wind in Yeats's Nature poems is vital in reconciling incompatible relationships. It is the power he appeals to when he is in need of reciprocal love or unity of being. As a creative principle and a spiritual force, the wind destroys and recreates. It reanimates life, thus placing the poet in the more harmonious world of imagination, which he opposes to the dead cold world of reality.

The "rose," like the wind, is imbued with mystical qualities in Yeats's world of Nature. It is a vegetal feature which most often has been exploited by poets as a conventional symbol of beauty. Yeats views the rose in his Nature poetry in the same light, but at a more profound level, it can be considered as one of the principal spirits that people the natural landscape, endowed with the functions of reconciling and directing those who are willing to savour the bounty of Nature. A good number of Yeats's "Rose" poems express this view, among which one of the most revealing is "To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time" which presents the rose as a beautiful charming flower as well as an active spirit directing the yearning poet towards the natural environment in which there is "eternal beauty wandering on her way." The persona in the poem pleads to the rose spirit for help, more especially because it is an instrument of salvation represented by the "rood" (the cross on which Jesus was crucified). Yeats uses here the rose as a symbol of sal-

vation by which man's gruesome fate in the world of reality can be escaped.

Apart from the vegetal and topographical features which perform vital spiritual roles and mysterious activities within the realm of Nature, there is another class of inhabitants who people Yeats's natural landscape. These are particular characters drawn from old Irish legends, such as druids and heroes of Irish myths like Fergus, the King of the Red Branch of Kings. They are seen performing mysterious roles which are principally that of ordering the activities of Nature to provide the glories the poet anticipates in the realm of his imagination.

The druid, an influential mystical presence, acts as a link between dewdrops, the agents of sleep and the dream, and various mystical characters within the natural landscape. In the conversational poem "Fergus and the Druid," the druid initiates Fergus in his passage from the real world into the realm of Nature. Like the wind and the rose, the druid acts as a liaison between the civilised world and the world of Nature. He is ready to initiate any person to the wisdom of dreams, anyone who rejects the world of civilisation, like Fergus does.

The "little bag of dreams" he provides Fergus with is a symbolic element which links Fergus to the ultimate in Nature. It is the key which opens Fergus's vision to the bounty of Nature, one of Yeats's dream metaphors suggesting that the ideal is seen and felt more authentically in Nature by the power of the imagination than by magic or other baser arts. This possibly gives credit to the hypothesis according to which this lower realm of his imagination is more fascinating and enchanting, as Fergus's zeal to possess the wisdom of dreams illustrates. For as soon as Fergus takes the little bag of dreams and loosens it, he is endowed with the power of vision which permits him to perceive his changing personality and nature.

In the poem "Who Goes With Fergus," the newly initiated persona is discovered in profound harmony with Nature. In fact, the whole poem is both ambiguously seductive and sinister because Fergus now seeks to lure the young to his dream dominion whose "woven shades" and "level shore" suggest the attraction to Nature. He is seen as performing a major role in the governing Nature:

For Fergus rules the brazen cars

And rules the shadow of the woods
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all the dishevelled wandering stars. (Yeats 49)

The “brazen cars” and “wandering stars” refer to celestial bodies like the sun, moon and stars which, together with “woods” and the “sea,” reveal the expanse of the natural environment controlled by Fergus, the scope of the realm of Nature which dreams and imagination project in Yeats’s Nature poetry.

We find in the analysis of the druid’s visionary experience related to the “little bag of dreams” that Nature itself is inspiring and inviting. It inspires the imagination by way of the dreams, “dew-drops” and the druid as the principal agent who induces characters like Fergus to adhere to the dream convention, by which means the expanse and the riches of Nature can be fully explored. Secondly, the dewdrops, engendering sleep and dreams, also initiate one to an awareness of other mystical presences in the world of Nature, mainly fairies, the wind-gods, the “mystical brotherhood, the “elemental powers,” the “rose,” and the heroes from Celtic legends, all playing significant spiritual roles, such as demonstrating the mysteries hidden in the heart of the universe, initiating and inviting characters from the world of reality to the fascinating domain of Nature. They are involved in ordering and shaping activities in the natural landscape and providing values which the poet finds gratifying in the realm of his imagination.

In the poem “Into the Twilight” the physical elements of nature are referred to as the “mystical brotherhood” which have unlimited liberty and freedom of action. The poem is an invitation to humanity, represented by the use of the metonymy “hearts,” to ignore the cares of the real world and wander into the realm of the imagination where,

Your mother Eire is always young,
Dew ever shining and twilight grey;
Though hope fall from you and love decay
Burning in fires of a slanderous tongue

Come hearts where hill is heaped upon hill:
For there the mystical brotherhood
Of sun and moon and hollow and wood
And river and stream work out their will (Yeats 65-66)

Unexpected libertine characteristics of Nature are emphasised in these lines: Life is not controlled; there is perpetual twilight with “Dew ever shining” and above all the expanse of Nature is not limited to a particular environment. Because of this, time passes very fast. The “mystical brotherhood” forms a complete whole and provides the harmony that exists in Nature.

The natural features, which constitute “the mystical brotherhood,” are referred to in other works as “elemental powers.” In “The Poet pleads With Elemental Powers,” these features are endowed with greater spiritual powers because the poet sees them as capable of subduing a stubborn beloved:

Great Powers of falling wave and wind and windy fire,
With your harmonious choir
Encircle her I love and sing her into peace,
That my old care may cease...
When the winds have gathered and the sun and moon burned dim
Above its cloudy rim. Yeats 80)

The “elemental powers” in the poem above, like the “mystical brotherhood” in “Into the Twilight” are seen as possessing that element of unity. They constitute a congregation, a “harmonious choir,” with the single unifying purpose of encircling or incorporating a strayed beloved into the unity which permeates the cosmos. This reflects Yeats’s fervent belief that Nature is gifted with spiritual forces whose major role is to create beauty. His imagination does not perceive nature as controlled by the faeries only. The wind and the fire, the sun and the moon in the poem cited above are what A. G. Stock describes as “flaming Angelic presences” because they are not mere elements of the universe but they play an important role in controlling and ordering human activities through their spiritual influence. In Yeats’s poetry therefore, the hills and valleys are themselves spirits, or to use Stock’s expression, “flaming Angelic presences.”

Yeats achieves, in his Nature poems, an interpretation of life, a re-definition of the sublime and a starting point for thought by investing Nature with mystical qualities seen, among other poetic figures, through the dewdrop and the dream metaphors. Apart from providing the poems with the ordinary beauty of the countryside, the dewdrops

and the dream offer Yeats's imagination vital values which are antithetical to those of the sensory world. Yeats's natural landscape is at every moment a romantic environment in which happiness, peace, liberty, harmony and the spiritual forces prevail. It is not the horrifying, awful yet attractive world of Wordsworth or Coleridge and Shelley. Yeats's emphasises the peaceful facet of the world of Wordsworth because there is hardly any mention of winter, sorrow or fear in his poems. Instead, he recurrently evokes singing and dancing, such as faeries do with the human child in "The Stolen Child." For Yeats, the natural elements and the spiritual ones are always seen in combination with one another.

The harmony prevalent in the realm of Nature is an emanation from reciprocal relationships, unity of being, peace, eternity and the celebration of art attainable through the dream. Aengus, the god of love in Irish myth and the persona of the poem "He Tells of a Valley Full of Lovers," dreams that he is standing in a valley and watching "happy lovers" pass two by two. This fascinates him and he cries out in his dream, in admiration of the attainment of reciprocal love. Aengus's experience is reminiscent of cosmic unity and of the harmony in relationships in other poems such as "The Song of Wandering Aengus," "Down by the Salley Gardens," and "The Lake Isles of Innisfree."

Compared with Nature, life contrasts with the fragmented anarchical perception of contemporary experience which, during the era of the high Romantics, was principally the outcome of the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the American War of Independence. For Yeats, it was the Irish uprising and the crises leading to World War One. Life against the background of Nature is the embodiment of a whole, in terms of man's inextricable union with his fellow human. The concept of unity of being becomes a salient trait of the realm of the imagination because the elements of Nature have a strong attachment to each other. Wordsworth describes the trifling blending of man with the starry universe and the divine as one total unified being. In the poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," he brilliantly illustrates the concept of cosmic harmony. This poem is one of joy in Nature, in which the daffodils, the waves and stars, all participate in one happy event. Wordsworth at first seems detached from this universal harmony, but by virtue of the imagination, "that inward eye" akin to Yeats's dream mechanism, he eventually joins it. There is a similar indication

of the poet's attachment to natural harmony in the poetry of Yeats exhibited in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." The protagonist in the poem yearns for the romantic ideals in Nature which are attached to his "deep heart's core." The urgency with which the speaker wants to go to Innisfree reveals the cosmic law of unity that binds any being willing to partake in the universal harmony.

Yeats aimed at a sublimation of instinctual feelings in his Nature poems, the kind of instinct which is achieved through the dream. He is not simply willing to display the tremendous riches and the awe and wonder that exist in the realm of Nature, like most of the radical Romantic poets do. His intention is to reach the "unseen order behind visible things" which, in his deepest convictions, could provide man with the stock of the rudimentary human needs absent in the world of reason. In the heart of the natural landscape which his imagination explores is the desire to weave the universe into one unified whole. His approach to Nature differs from that of Wordsworth because the latter is sermon-like, preaching to prick the imaginations of men to turn from the life of rational experience and consider the domain of Nature imbued with instinctual feeling:

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher (Wordsworth 1374-75)

Wordsworth's nature mysticism becomes at times a theory of poetry and an analysis of consciousness opposed to Yeats's glorification of the bounty of Nature as a harmless harmonious paradise where ideal life is attainable.

Yeats's fairyland, including the mystical presences and the "elemental powers" that inhabit it, reached through the dewdrop and the dream, as Edmund Wilson puts it, "has become the symbol of the imagination itself" (18). It is a world of its own, infinitely delightful and seductive. It is the realm of Yeats's imagination to which one becomes addicted, with which one becomes delirious and drunken. Lastly, it is a world which is somehow incompatible with and fatal to real existence, which is "full of weeping" and from which the poet wishes to withdraw.

Had Yeats succeeded in solving the problems he faced in his life before 1900, he would perhaps have ended up as a decadent Nature poet, or would simply have added more colour and mystery to Nature and preached Pantheism as his doctrine of art, like Wordsworth did. This poet conceives and creates the universe of the landscape as an abode for the escape from the tortuous experiences of real life, as an environment he could admire and inhabit through his imagination. But the latter finds such a world too vague and vulnerable to the point that the cares of reality could still shatter his dream. By the time he wrote "The Winds Among the Reeds," the strain of unrequited love had gone on for too long for him. Some poems in that collection are stormy and many are full of desolation. The "Rose" no longer remains an all-inclusive symbol of spiritual beauty and the agent of reconciliation between the fragmented values and the warring factions. It now becomes, like Blake's "sick rose," a mortifying element because it reminds the poet of lost love, and it seems to Yeats the world of Nature was not in perfect accordance with the values he sought in his imagination. Concomitantly, the dewdrops which induce peace through sleep and dream are constantly distorted by images from the real world. Similarly, the wind no is longer a symbol of spiritual rebirth but becomes a messenger of evil. In "He Reproves the Curlew," it transmits the evil message in the cry of the curlew and reminds the poet of his lost love, thereby placing him in desolation. Furthermore, in "The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart," Yeats perceives nature as "uncomely and broken," "worn out and old," destroying the rose which blossoms in his heart. Consequently, the persona in the poem is determined to rebuild another universe because of the imperfections he becomes aware of in the natural environment:

The wrong of unshapely things is wrong too great to be told,
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,
With the earth and sky and water, remade, like a casket of gold...
(Yeats 62)

The imagination in the poem is the principal agent, as well as the power which seeks and reconciles life with a higher degree of consciousness. This consciousness is no longer possible in the realm of nature because the poet realises that the natural environment is "unshapely" and does not effectively represent the ideals of the beau-

ty he envisages. The imagination then comes to explore higher and more concrete realms – myth and vision – where the world could be rebuilt like a “casket of gold.” The emphasis here is laid on the intrinsic values which “gold” symbolises. Like peace, reciprocated love, unity of being and eternity, “gold” represents a world of imagination which is no longer vulnerable, like the faeryland of Oisín and Niamh in “The Wanderings of Oisín” which is ruined because Oisín thinks of revisiting his Fenian friends in the real world. In doing so, mortality asserts its claim.

Yeats’s vision of a world made of gold is best achieved in his greatest visionary poems in the second phase of his career such as “The Tower,” and particularly “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Byzantium”. “Byzantium” can be taken as a marvellously contrived emblem of what Yeats took the work of art to be. “Byzantium” is the symbol of the celebration of art. It is presented as possessing enduring elements wrought by the artist. Symbols of creation are strongly suggested here where the “Grecian goldsmiths” work the bough, the singing bird, and other images in gold. The poet pictures himself as the golden bird on the golden bough singing to the lords and ladies of Byzantium (Nkengasong, *W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot: Myths...* 136-37). The reconciling force here is the imagination, the creator of the symbol of art. The poem is a convincing demonstration of the imagination which, through artistic consciousness, as the Grecian goldsmith illustrates it, is closely connected with what Bowra calls “the unseen order behind visible things,” including peace, harmony, cosmic unity, eternity and most important, the sublimation of art. Like the old man and the golden bird in the Byzantium poems whose souls are invested with the creative imagination, Yeats transcends his art to that dome of eternity from where he beckons man to that realm of the imagination where,

...being dead, we rise,
Dream and so create
Translunar Paradise (“The Tower” 223-24)

emphasising the power of the dream shaping the vision of the poet, as is the case with the radical Romantic poets. Interestingly, Vivian De Sola Pinto holds that in the second phase of Yeats’s career, represented by “The Wind Among the Reeds” (1900), “he is making a voyage within, withdrawing as much as possible from the contemporary world

and enriching his inner life by concentrating on purely visionary themes” (106).

The “journey within” mentioned in Pinto’s assessment is one into the profounder realms of the imagination, seen at the level of vision, to attain an ideal reality through the quest for mysticism and exciting mythologies (Nkengasong: 2004 1). The journey towards a higher realm symbolised by “The Tower” and the “Byzantium” is expedient, because the contemporary world and the realm of Nature do not represent a satisfactory account of his ideals. Yeats’s concentration on visionary themes generates a most important difference between Yeats and the major Romantics. The imagination of the major Romantics does not follow a progressive trend from one realm to the other, as is the case with Yeats whose imagination turns from the realm of Nature to the realm of the mythical and to the purely visionary realm of the Byzantine dome.

The tradition started by the Romantics is to allow the imagination discover this truth and build myths around it. If Yeats improves on this tradition and reaches a high level of poetic achievement like the radical Romantics, it is because his poetry is influenced, more than that of any major Romantic poet, by the “anarchy loosed upon the world” surrounding him, lucidly expressed in “The Second Coming,” and which he desperately sought to rebuild through the dream convention. Thus, Yeats, from the point of view of his poetic imagination, appears as a major Romantic, differing from the Wordsworthian School or Romanticists only in terms of era, and the circumstances in real life that sharpened his visionary insight.

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