W. B. YEATS: VISION AND EXPERIENCE

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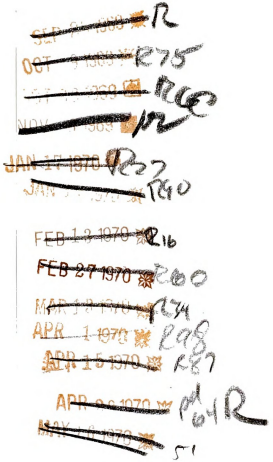

ABSTRACT

W. B. YEATS: VISION AND EXPERIENCE

By

Okifumi Komesu

This study concerns itself with the question of whether W. B. Yeats was a visionary poet or not in the light of his Oriental interest. The question is not new; indeed, it is central to the discussion of Yeats's thought and art. Opinions, however, are divided on the problem. One line of criticism explains away the poet as a non-visionary poet. Another line of criticism holds that the poet did attain the vision of "Unity of Being." Still another views the poet as a visionary failure.

The writer is sympathetic with the third of the critical views cited above. It is the writer's belief that Yeats should not be looked upon either as a non-visionary or as a perfect visionary. His mode of thinking was characterized by a double perspective. Neither the visionary perspective nor the non-visionary perspective should be denied in the study of Yeats.

Yeats's thought was characterized by a polarity of perspectives; the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive. The monistic-experiential perspective motivated Yeats to adopt the life of a saint whereby he tried to attain a unified vision of eternal truth; while the dualistic-cognitive perspective envisaged as an ideal type of existence the life of an artist, in which the poet tried to live affirmatively in the rugged world of time, "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart." These antithetical perspectives did not deny each other in Yeats's mind; rather, they complemented each other, "dying each other's life, living each other's death," to use the

Heraclitian phrase Yeats loved so much. The one perspective implied and necessitated the other. Climbing the ladder to Heaven meant for Yeats to start climbing at the bottom rung of the ladder planted on earth.

Of the two poles the pole of unity was ideal for Yeats. However, he was skeptical about the possibility of ever attaining a unified vision. Thus, the idea of failure haunted him till death. In fact, the realization of failure seems to be his personal myth that underlay his thought. In this respect, Yeats's meeting with the East is significant, for Eastern thought is characterized by the monistic-experiential perspective and emphasizes the importance of the experience of spiritual freedom.

This study attempts to delineate the patterns of failure in Yeats's understanding and adaptation to his purposes of Eastern thought and art, namely, the Hindu philosophy and the Japanese Noh drama. It argues against the extravagant claim on Yeats's debt to the East. Further, it looks for discrepancies that exist between Yeats's thought and aesthetic and Eastern thought and the Noh. It concludes that the double perspective of monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive is basic in Yeats's interest in the East.

This study does not concern itself with source-hunting. The writer realizes, of course, that any comprehensive study of Yeats's thought and art cannot be done without utilizing ample source material. On the other hand, he strongly doubts the feasibility of the method used by some critics who try to align Yeats's thought and art to a particular doctrine or system from which Yeats gained extensive information. One must be extremely careful in using source material when one studies

such an artist as Yeats, who was widely read in the literatures of both the West and the East, and who comprehended much but who misapprehended also. Most of Yeats's sources have been studied, but some critics make too extravagant a claim on Yeats's debt to his sources. Some sources Yeats misapprehended and some he only partially adapted to his works. It is time, the writer believes, that one should examine how much Yeats is really indebted to his sources. This study constitutes an attempt at such an examination.

W. B. YEATS: VISION AND EXPERIENCE

By

Okifumi Komesu

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PREFACE

This study represents the conclusion of my academic training in the United States which lasted for a period of eight years. Being an Asian, I have found the training valuable not only in the purely professional sense but also in the broad sense of cultural and personal philosophy: my experience with American culture and the literature of the English-speaking world helped me to shape a new life and world view.

The choice of the topic for the thesis was almost inevitable, for I have felt that my cultural background and my experience in the United States can be most profitably utilized for the study of the East-West relationship. Moreover, my own experience is itself a living example of East-West relationship. In a sense, this study is a dialogue between Yeats, the apprentice to Eastern arts, and myself, an apprentice to Western trade.

My thanks are due to the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyus for a scholarship which enabled me to complete my undergraduate program, and to the Department of English, Michigan State University, for a graduate assistantship. I am especially grateful to Professors C. David Mead and Robert J. Geist, without whose consideration and personal interest in my work I would not have been able to come this far. My thanks are also due to Professor Sam S. Baskett, who was a member of my guidance committee and who is one of the most inspiring teachers I have had, and to Professor Hazard Adams, who first introduced me to the works of W. B. Yeats and who was the original chairman of my guidance committee. Last but not least, I am grateful to my wife, whose enduring and loving heart has always been a stay and comfort to me through the difficult years of my graduate study in a foreign land.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE ii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. THE SAINT OR THE ARTIST 16

III. BRAHMAN AND DAIMON 51

IV. THE FLOWER OR THE GYRE 83

V. THE FLOWER THAT NEVER BLOOMED 152

VI. CONCLUSION 201

BIBLIOGRAPHY 209

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I

The idea that W. B. Yeats failed as a visionary poet was put forward by C. M. Bowra as early as 1943. Bowra, who saw Yeats's development as a struggle between "Soul" and "Self" or the mystical Yeats and the life-affirming Yeats, concluded that the "Self" was the final victor.[1] Yeats as a visionary poet is a much discussed topic, and there have been disagreements as to whether he was a success or a failure. Hazard Adams essentially agrees with Bowra but goes beyond him by saying that Yeats's poems "are truly great poems for the reason that they dramatize their own failure as truly visionary documents."[2] F. A. C. Wilson attempts to prove in his two books that Yeats can and must be placed in the "Heterodox tradition in mysticism."[3] A third position is taken by Alex Zwerdling, who sees Yeats as a sort of tragic compromise, a mystic who "did not leave man's world behind."[4]

Bowra's formula is convenient for explaining the genesis of the "old man's eagle mind" of the later period of Yeats, but it is inadequate to explain the antinomical concept of subjectivity and objectivity in the thought and cosmology of Yeats, for, though Bowra's "Soul" may mean

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1. C. M. Bowra, The Heritage of Symbolism, London: Macmillan, 1962, p. 214.

2. Hazard Adams, Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision, Cornell University Press, 1955, p. 272.

3. F. A. C. Wilson, W. B. Yeats and Tradition, London: Victor Gollancz, 1961, p. 16.

4. Alex Zwerdling, Yeats and the Heroic Ideal, New York: New York University Press, 1965, p. 171.

Yeats's "subjective tincture," the "Self" can hardly be called "objective" in the Yeatsian sense. Bowra's insight, however, anticipated two critical views of Yeats now in vogue. One is to explain away Yeats as a non-visionary poet and concentrate on the poet as a literary artist. The other view makes much of the antinomical tension and finds Yeats's creative energy in the perennial struggle between the soul and the self.

The critics with the former view are mainly interested in the symbology of Yeats rather than in his thought. At the hands of these critics Yeats's prose writings become a mere set of metaphors and symbols for his poetry, a grammar of romantic symbolism. Helen H. Vendler, for instance, who seeks in A Vision "a systematic background against which Yeats's poetry and plays must be read to acquire their proper resonance,"[5] finally reduces the book to "a series of metaphorical statements about poetry."[6] Northrop Frye, in his essay on Yeats, does essentially the same thing. He says in the essay:

> I have laid such stress on the Vision because it does give an account, for better or worse, of the symbolic structure which underlies Yeats's poetry from at least 1917 onward. ...It presents a physical or phenomenal world apprehended by the consciousness and a hyperphysical world apprehended by the sub-conscious, and in so doing it preserves the original romantic cult of nature which led to identifying spiritual and hyperphysical reality. It does not get, except in theory, to any order above that of nature or to any mode of consciousness in which the gap between subject and object is bridged.[7]

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5. Helen Hennessy Vendler, Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 5.

6. Ibid., p. 30.

7. Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, Studies in Poetic Mythology, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963, p. 231.

Two things become clear: in Frye's view, A Vision is a grammar book of romantic symbolism in which one is to find the secret of structure of the later poetry of Yeats. And, A Vision is not to be taken as a visionary document. The second point is important, because it denies Yeats a visionary experience. Elsewhere Frye reinforces the point by comparing Yeats's system with Blake's. Yeats's is essentially a vision of the cyclical world with "the upper limit sealed off"; that is, Yeats lacks the vortex of vision whereby one is to escape from Beulah into eternity. This second point is also important because only after this point is established is it possible to treat A Vision and other writings of Yeats as a body of grammatical rules of poetry, "a means of expression and not a body of doctrine, not something to look at but something to look and speak through, a dramatic mask."[8] Vendler arrives at her critical position through a similar process. She denies a mystical orientation in A Vision and believes that "A Vision is something not supernatural in its concerns, but natural...."[9]

Critics at the other pole are those who make much of the tension that exists between Yeats's self and antiself. They concern themselves with Yeats's progress from antinomy to the Unity of Being. Two different views of Yeats result from this critical attitude. One is to regard Yeats as a successful artist capitalizing on his failure as a visionary. The failure of vision caused by too powerful a pull of the antinomical world of nature is the source of Yeats's creative

8. Ibid., p. 236.

9. Vendler, op. cit., p. 3.

energy. This is Adams's position. The critics with the other view see Yeats more as a dramatist than a visionary. Leonard E. Nathan believes that Yeats's antinomical concept is represented in his drama as a "war of orders," the natural order of dualism and the supernatural order of Unity of Being. The hero, who is of the natural order, "must strive against the world with his excessively passionate longing for perfection, for Unity of Being, and is necessarily defeated by his own and the world's limits. The very character of the world, of which he is a part, its perpetual divisiveness, makes Unity of Being impossible...."[10] Out of this failure emerges a tragic stature and a tragic vision of the hero.

The critics cited above, regardless of their different views and approaches, fall into a group on one point: they consider Yeats either a non-visionary or a visionary failure. Against these critics there are some, including Wilson and Zwerdling, who hold that Yeats did attain the vision of Unity of Being. Though he recognizes an antinomical conflict between visionary susceptibility and compensatory earthiness that exists in Yeats, Wilson believes that it is "useful to concentrate in the first place on his visionary sensibility," and that "his vision...has too often been denied him in the past."[11] A Vision, too, is "the product of acquired learning and of the visionary faculty...."[12] And thus he concludes that

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10. Leonard E. Nathan, The Tragic Drama of William Butler Yeats, Figures in a Dance, New York: Columbia University Press, 1965, p. 163.

11. Wilson, W. B. Yeats and Tradition, p. 18.

12. Ibid., p. 19.

> years of love for the man and his work have left me in the position of believing that what Yeats meant by visionary experience, the greatest sustaining influence on his life and art, was not substantially other than the state described by more orthodox mystics.[13]

Having placed Yeats in what he calls the "heterodox tradition of mysticism," Wilson proceeds to track down the sources of Yeats's symbols, showing how the traditional symbols are used in the plays and some of the lyrics of Yeats. Zwerdling reaches a different conclusion from Wilson's. In his recent book, in which he discusses different types of Yeats's heroic image, Zwerdling includes a visionary as a heroic type. He argues against Bowra and others, who believe that the earthly triumphs over the spiritual in the later days of Yeats, and insists that for Yeats a union with God never meant the casting away of earthly desires. A vision of reality for Yeats was always nurtured by his keen feeling for natural things, as, according to Zwerdling, in the Byzantium poems. Thus, "the Yeatsian visionary does not leave the actual world behind in the moment of vision. He sees both the tree and its form, both the dancer and the dance, both the scarecrow and the child, in one instant of time."[14] Essentially the same attitude is maintained by Whitaker, who applies the dichotomy of the visionary and the earthly perspectives to Yeats's concept of history. Like Zwerdling he sees no fundamental conflict between the two perspectives, which he calls "a God's-eye view of the panorama of history"[15] and "existential immersion in history."[16] "In

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13. Ibid., p. 20.

14. Zwerdling, op. cit., p. 169.

15. Thomas Whitaker, Swan and Shadow, Yeats's Dialogue with History, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964, p. 8.

16. Ibid., p. 9.

portions of A Vision," Whitaker believes, "Yeats stands above time, and history is projected beneath him as an almost completely external object.... Elsewhere he explores his concrete relation to Sligo, to his ancestors, and to the immediate history of Ireland--seeing himself as an actor in a drama that combines present and past in a living whole."[17] These two perspectives, qualifying each other at every point of Yeats's thought, gradually fuse themselves into a single dramatic vision. Whitaker traces the development of each perspective and shows how the group of symbols belonging to each perspective becomes a part of a poetic whole.

I have noted the variety of Yeats's critics, with their different approaches and interests leading to different conclusions, in order to show how important the problem of Yeats as a visionary poet is in the criticism of Yeats and how diverse conclusions have been reached by these critics. I have not, of course, exhausted the list of critics who deal with the problem in one way or another. My chief concern here is not to make a survey of the Yeatsian scholarship dealing with the question, but to bring to the fore the problem of visionary experience--the problem which cannot escape the attention of Yeatsian critics of whatever view. These critics, however, do not do justice to Yeats, for they ignore, in one way or another, some vital aspects of Yeats that are fundamental to his mode of thinking. Those who consider the poet a non-visionary display considerable uneasiness by taking a rather uncomfortable step before they reach their conclusion, that is, declaring A Vision and other visionary documents of Yeats as insincere. On the

17. Ibid.

other hand, those who accept the poet wholeheartedly as a visionary success seem to run the risk of glossing over delicate expressions of "bitter" and intricate patterns of failure pervading his prose and verse. Above all, they ignore the dramatic confession that Yeats himself made in 1937 at the end of A Vision. It is my belief that Yeats should not be looked upon either as a non-visionary or as a perfect visionary. His mode of thinking was characterized by a double perspective, which is aptly revealed in his introduction to A Vision (1937). Concerning the question whether or not he believes in what he says in the book, he writes:

> To such a question I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice.[18]

Neither the visionary perspective nor the non-visionary perspective should be denied in the study of Yeats.

II

Yeats was a candid dualist, but he was a dualist of a very sophisticated type. He was a dualist in the sense that he believed in antinomy as the basic principle of reality; he was a dualist in setting up two worlds--the world of names and forms and the world of unity; he was a dualist in trying to be both a saint and an artist; but above all, he was a dualist in the very sense that he adopted a dualistic mode of

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18. A Vision, p. 25.

thinking while keeping monistic aspirations. Yeats's failure stemmed from such a double perspective.

Yeats's dualism perplexed generations of Yeatsian critics. As I have outlined above, some saw a war between the two perspectives, some saw a complementary relationship between the two, some saw a final resolution of them, and others looked upon them as an aesthetic device. Non, except perhaps Adams, saw the dualism as a process--a process in the Yeatsian multifarious senses, philosophical, spiritual, cultural, as well as aesthetic. At one end of the process is the status quo and at the other end is the world of the ideal; stated in other terms, the self and the antiself, the conflict and the unity, the Anima Hominis and the Anima Mundi, the "Hodos Chameliontos" and the "Thirteenth Sphere," and so on. The two poles are not completely severed; rather, they exist in one continuum. They are not in eternal conflict like the war between Heaven and Hell, in which one or the other must triumph, but in a sort of reconciliatory war, not killing each other, but "dying each other's life, living each other's death."[19] The one world implied and necessitated the other. Finding the antiself meant for one to start from the self. Climbing the ladder to Heaven meant for one to start climbing at the bottom rung of the ladder planted on earth. Yeats spent the better part of his life constructing and climbing that ladder. When, in his later years, he found that ladder gone,[20] he found himself at the spot where the ladder started.

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19. Ibid., p. 68.

20. See "The Circus Animals' Desertion" in the Collected Poems, pp. 335-336.

Of the two poles the pole of unity was ideal for Yeats. To attain a unity at all levels of life--spiritual, aesthetic, cultural, philosophical, etc--was Yeats's lifelong aim. His study of Irish mythology, his interest in Western and Eastern occultism, his fascination with the Japanese Noh drama, his absorption of various philosophical systems all come to one point, that is, his aim of achieving a unity out of multiplicity, a resolution of all conflict. At the spiritual level he endeavored to attain a Unity of Being, a turning of consciousness into pure knowledge; at the aesthetic level, he tried to achieve a Unity of Image, an image whereby reality is evoked; and at the cultural level, he tried to achieve a Unity of Culture, a Byzantium where all things have oneness as if they were conceived by a single mind.

Yeats's effort to achieve his lifelong aim culminated in the writing of A Vision (1925) and ended in frustration upon reconsidering his achievement in that book, and his confession of failure is presented to us in the form of an epilogue in the revised edition (1937) of the book. Yeats felt, however, similar frustrations earlier in his life. In "Rosa Alchemica" he writes:

> I had dissolved indeed the mortal world and lived amid immortal essences, but had obtained no miraculous ecstasy. As I thought of these things, I drew aside the curtains and looked out into the darkness, and it seemed to my troubled fancy that all those little points of light filling the sky were the furnaces of inumerable divine alchemists, who labour continually, turning lead into gold, weariness into ecstasy, bodies into souls, the darkness into God; and at their perfect labour my mortality grew heavy, and I cried out, as so many dreamers and men of letters in our age have cried, for the birth of that elaborate spiritual beauty which could alone uplift souls weighted with so many dreams.[21]

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21. Mythologies, New York: Macmillan, 1959, p. 270.

Much later, in his introduction to Shri Purohit's An Indian Monk (1932), Yeats confesses that the book has given him in a complete form what he sought after in his study of the Irish folk tales, occultism, and Christian and Pagan visionary writings:

> The book lies before me complete; it seems to me something I have waited for since I was seventeen years old. About that age, bored by an Irish Protestant point of view that suggested by its blank abstraction chloride of lime, I began to question the country-people about apparitions. Some dozen years later Lady Gregory collected with my help the stories in her Visions and Beliefs. Again and again, she and I felt that we had got down, as it were, into some fibrous darkness, into some matrix out of which everything has come,...but there was always something lacking.... When Shri Purohit Swami described his journey up those seven thousand steps at Mount Ginar, that creaking bed, that sound of pattens, in the little old half-forgotten temples, and fitted everything into an ancient discipline, a philosophy that satisfied the intellect, I found all I wanted.[22]

The book is Shri Purohit's autobiography, which describes the author's spiritual experience. The Swami's sort of experience indeed never came to Yeats. He knew all about it, but he never attained it. That is why he advised Shri Purohit to write about it.

> Presently I said: "The ideas of India have been expounded again and again, nor do we lack ideas of our own; discussion has been exhausted, but we lack experience. Write what you have just told us; keep out all philosophy, unless it interprets something seen or done."[23]

What Yeats lacked, then, was experience. Yeats had earlier commented that the saint had a direct passage to the antiself while the artist and the hero did not:

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22. Essays and Introductions, New York: Macmillan, 1961, p. 429.

23. Ibid., p. 428.

> The poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, the hero in defeat. ... The saint alone is not deceived, neither thrusting with his shoulder nor holding out unsatisfied hands. He could climb without wandering to the antithetical self of the world, the Indian narrowing his thought in meditation or driving it away in contemplation, the Christian copying Christ, the antithetical self of the classic world. For a hero loves the world till it breaks him, and the poet till it has broken faith; but while the world was yet debonair, the saint has turned away, and because he renounced experience itself, he will wear his mask as he finds it.[24]

Being an artist, Yeats could not forsake the world as the saint could and, therefore, could not attain his antiself.

To return to the idea of dualism as a process, there are enough references in Yeats's writings to make it clear that he failed in his progress from the pole of the self to that of the antiself. In fact, the realization of failure seems to be his personal myth that underlies all his thought and activities as an artist and thinker. It is not surprising that he should have such a myth for himself, for he believed that every man had his own myth. Commenting on Shakespeare he wrote in his essay, "Stratford-on-Avon":

> I have often had the fancy that there is some one myth for every man, which, if we but knew it, would make us understand all he did and thought. Shakespeare's myth, it may be, describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness. It is in the story of Hamlet, who saw too great issues everywhere to play the trivial game of life, and of Fortinbras, who came from fighting battles about 'a little patch of ground' so poor that one of his captains would not give 'six ducats' to 'farm it,' and who was yet acclaimed by Hamlet and by all as the only befitting King.[25]

Yeats's own was a myth of failure. Having placed himself between the

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24. Mythologies, p. 337.

25. A Vision (1937), p. 214.

two world-views, the dualistic-cognitive and the monistic-experiential, Yeats chose to ascend to the world of experience but sank with his own weight to be absorbed into the dualistic world of knowledge.

Perhaps it is necessary to define more clearly the terms which are being used to explain Yeats's dualism. Yeats has various terms of his own, but they are so many that using them all would hinder lucid discussion. The term "dualistic-cognitive" is used to mean the world of consciousness (which Yeats equates with conflict[26]) and of many ("Hodos Chameliontos" is Yeats's term). This term has both metaphysical and epistemological implications. In the dualistic-cognitive perspective Yeats sees duality in reality: the self and the antiself, conflict and unity, Image and Mask, Anima Hominis and Anima Mundi, and so on. This perspective envisages the world of cognition where there are the seer and the seen, the knower and the known. In this view, logic and image are possible. In the philosophical sense, this is the perspective in which intellect and reason have full play. In the aesthetic sense, this is the perspective which makes symbolism not only possible but useful, for symbols, taken from the world of senses, are necessary to evoke the ideas from the Anima Mundi.

Opposed to the dualistic-cognitive world-view is the monistic-experiential world-view. The term is used to mean metaphysically that which is represented by such ideas as "unity" (which is a Yeatsian term), "Brahmanic experience," "oneness," etc. In the monistic-experiential perspective Yeats tries to resolve all conflict, aspires to attain sainthood in which the dancer and the dance are seen as one

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26. See A Vision (1937), p. 214.

and the tree is seen in its totality, and renounces the "sensual music" of the world of nature. This perspective envisages the world of experience where there is no distinction between the seer and the seen, the knower and the known. In this view logic has done its work[27] and image is fused into reality (the self has found its mask). This perspective, in short, envisages what Yeats calls in A Vision the Thirteenth Sphere, a liberation of the spirit.

Such, then, is Yeats's dualism. Much of his writing is sustained by this dualism. In some of his works the dualistic-cognitive perspective plays the major role, while in others the monistic-experiential perspective comes to the fore. The process from one perspective to the other is the subject of many poems, such as "Sailing to Byzantium" and "Byzantium." The theme of failure in the process is also taken up in many poems and essays. In Yeatsian terms, the poles of dualism have a gyric relationship to each other. When the one pole waxes the other wanes and when the one wanes the other waxes. Yeats never seems to be able to get out of the gyric movement. Indeed, Yeats's incorrigible dualism is shown in his belief that the dualistic-cognitive perspective is necessary in order to attain the monistic-experiential, that unity arises out of conflict.

In the following chapters I shall try to see the patterns of failure in Yeats in the light of his Oriental interest. His meeting with the East was almost inevitable, since the East provided for him

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27. Yeats believed that logic was a necessary preliminary to inspiration, but no more. (See the letter to W. T. Horton, dated May 5, 1896, in The Letters of W. B. Yeats, Allan Wade, ed., New York: Macmillan, 1955, p. 262.) The subject will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

rich sources of information and living models to follow in the philosophy and art in which the monistic-experiential perspective is predominant. As he "found all [he] wanted" in Shri Purohit's account of his experience, so he found his ideal form of drama in the Japanese Noh. However, as the monistic-experiential world was finally denied to Yeats, so the East remained out of his reach. As early as 1909 Yeats realized how difficult it was for a Westerner to absorb the Eastern way.

> By implication the philosophy of Irish faery lore declares that all power is from the body, all intelligence from the spirit. Western civilization, religion and magic insist on power and therefore on body, and hence these three doctrines--efficient rule--the Incarnation--thaumaturgy. Eastern thoughts answer to these with indifference to rule, scorn of the flesh, contemplation of the formless. Western minds who follow the Eastern way become weak and vapoury, because unfit for the work forced upon them by Western life.[28]

Likewise, Yeats the Western mind could not quite follow the Eastern way, for the burden placed on him by the Western dualistic-cognitive perspective was too heavy.

This study does not concern itself with source-hunting. Rather it attempts to delineate the patterns of failure in Yeats's understanding and adaptation to his purposes of Eastern thought and art, namely, the Hindu philosophy and the Japanese Noh drama. In Chapter Two I shall discuss the theme of failure in Yeats's works in general terms. The subject is pursued without recourse to outside sources. In Chapter Three Yeats's idea of freedom in the light of his understanding of Hindu thought will be discussed. Chapter Four will concentrate on Yeats's interest in the Japanese Noh drama. There I shall try to

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28. Autobiographies, London: Macmillan, 1961, pp. 481f.

make clear on the theoretic basis what Yeats found and missed in that highly sophisticated dramatic form of medieval Japan. Chapter Five will be focussed on the structural and thematic analysis of Yeats's "Noh" plays in the light of his understanding of the Noh theory. And finally, Chapter Six will draw some conclusions on Yeats's thought.

My methodology inclines to the formalistic side at times and to the comparative side at other times. My choice is due partly to the circumstances and partly to my conviction. Having to do most of my research on the remote island of Okinawa in the Western Pacific, where resources are severely limited, I have found it practically impossible to do any type of research that required a mine of source material. Any comprehensive study of Yeats's thought and art can be done only by one to whom ample Western material is available, for, after all, Yeats was a Western poet and must be treated as such. On the other hand, I strongly doubt the feasibility of the method used by some critics who try to align Yeats's thought and art to a particular doctrine or system from which Yeats gained some information, or a number of such doctrines. I believe that one must be extremely careful in using source material when one studies such an artist as Yeats, who was widely read in the literatures of both the West and the East, and who comprehended much but misapprehended also. Most of Yeats's sources have been studied, but some critics, notably Wilson, make too extravagant a claim on Yeats's debt to his sources. Some sources Yeats misapprehended and some he only partially adapted to his works. It is time, I believe, that one should examine how much he is really indebted to his sources. My study will, I hope, constitute an attempt at such an examination.

CHAPTER TWO

The Saint or the Artist

I

In a short essay in the Discoveries (1906) Yeats distinguishes the saint from the artist in an analogy of a wheel as follows:

> If it be true that God is a circle whose centre is everywhere, the saint goes to the centre, the poet and artist to the ring where everything comes round again.[1]

The saint is interested in what is fixed and eternal while the artist seeks what is perpetually recurring in the world of time and the senses.

Yeats envisaged the life of the saint and that of the artist as antithetical to each other. Yet he endeavored throughout his life to live both as an artist and a saint. The two types of life were conceived in Yeats's mind with the two perspectives that he adopted for himself: the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive. The monistic-experiential perspective envisaged the life of the saint as an ideal type of life, while the dualistic-cognitive perspective found its ideal in the life of the artist.

Yeats the saint endeavored to fathom the secret of the universe and transcend the dualistic restrictions of the phenomenal world; and Yeats the artist tried to live affirmatively in the rugged world of time and the senses and concentrated on creative activity. It was mainly as the artist, however, that Yeats found his genius more fitting

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1. Essays and Introductions, p. 287.

and productive. Although he aspired till death to achieve his saintly objective, his dualistic-cognitive perspective constantly checked his aspirations.

Whichever type of life he pursued, Yeats constantly carried within himself a polarity of perspectives. In the pursuit of the saintly life he could not abandon the dualistic-cognitive perspective; and in the pursuit of the creative life he could not dispense with the monistic-experiential perspective.

The double perspective is clearly shown in A Vision, in which he exhausts his imaginative power in mapping out the realm of reality in geometric abstraction while attempting through the very effort to gain the perfect knowledge of reality, a final delivery from the cycle of birth and death. A Vision, in this sense, is a record of an attempt and a failure of Yeats the saint. The section called "THE END OF THE CYCLE," included in the 1937 edition of the book, is a very important part of the work that requires a careful and minute study. Yeats ends the section with a question, which leaves the whole issue in typically Yeatsian ambiguity:

> Shall we follow the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand, or mount to that other Heracles, man, not image, he that has for his bride Hebe, "The daughter of Zeus, the mighty, and Hera, shod with gold"?[2]

The choice would have been a difficult one, had Yeats had it. But we know, upon reading the book, that he had to follow Heracles the mortal man. As his works show, Yeats adhered to the heroic discipline in his creative activity rather than pursuing saintly visions.

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2. A Vision (1937), p. 302.

The double perspective is also evident in his creative activity. Although he dealt as an artist with symbols and "those recurring images" and believed in tragic conflict, Yeats had a firm conviction in ecstasy as the ultimate aim of art. The artist, Yeats believed, is confined by nature to the things of the earth and is permitted to work from "desire to weariness and from weariness to desire," creating his works out of those images that recur in the world of time or of conflicting elements that symbolize the world of antinomy. The artist should, nevertheless, work toward some sort of vision or a reverie in which individuals are drowned in the Great One, Anima Mundi, a vast reservoir of tribal memory. Symbols and images are the triggers whereby the great memory is evoked. The artist must painfully work his way out of conflict toward a vision of reality. For such tragic writers as Dante and Villon, Yeats believed, a vision of reality was possible.

Yeats, however, expresses a profound pessimism over the adequacy of his approach to reality. Later in his life he casts doubt as to the possibility of ever evoking reality through images and symbols. If these are not the same as reality itself, then they are caught in the world of time and are therefore mutable; they are withering images that have no eternal value. What is more, the so-called recurring images may not recur at all, "for no recurring spring ever brings again yesterday's clock."[3] If, then, the so-called recurring images may not recur at all, the artist's work comes to naught: not only will he not attain a vision of reality, but he is laboring with things that are subject to sure death. This is a horrible realization for one whose

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3. Essays and Introductions, p. 288.

lifelong aim has been to attain a final liberation from the mundane and the temporal.

The saint and the artist thus represent in Yeats his double perspective of the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive. Taken separately, however, each carries a polarity of perspectives. The saint carries within himself the dualistic-cognitive pole, while the artist carries the monistic-experiential pole. Whether as the saint or as the artist, Yeats labored in the direction toward which his monistic-experiential perspective pointed, but his attempt ended in a failure because of the reverse pull of the dualistic-cognitive perspective. Yeats's attempt to be a saint failed because he only tried to map out reality in cognitive terms, in geometric abstraction. So, he followed the way of art. Again in art, he tried to gain an ecstatic vision, but he never abandoned his dualistic-cognitive perspective, affirming the antinomical aspect of creative process as exemplified in Dante.

II

The failure of experience was quite real to Yeats. It was neither a metaphor nor a dramatic device for his poetry. Otherwise he would not have made a confession of failure so frequently throughout his life. It is difficult to doubt the poet's sincerity in making such an admission so persistently.

The oft-quoted confession of failure that Yeats makes at the end of A Vision (1937) is perhaps the most dramatic of all these acknowledgments. Here we might quote it in full in order to examine it in detail:

THE END OF THE CYCLE

I

Day after day I have sat in my chair turning a symbol over in my mind, exploring all its details, defining and again defining its elements, testing my convictions and those of others by its unity, attempting to substitute particulars for an abstraction like that of algebra. I have felt the conviction of a lifetime melt though at an age when the mind should be rigid, and others take their place, and these in turn give way to others. How far can I accept socialistic or communistic prophesies? I remember the decadence Balzac foretold to the Duchess de Castries. I remember debates in the little coach-house at Hammersmith or at Morris' super-table afterwards. I remember the Apocalyptic dreams of the Japanese Saint and labour leader Kagawa, whose books were lent me by a Galway clergyman. I remember a Communist described by Captain White in his memoirs ploughing on the Cotswold Hills, nothing on his great hairy body but sandals and a pair of drawers, nothing in his head but Hegel's logic. Then I draw myself up into the symbol and it seems as if I should know all if I could but banish memories and find everything in the symbol.

II

But nothing comes--though this moment was to reward me for all my toil. Perhaps I am too old. Surely something would come when I meditated under the direction of the Cabalists. What discords will drive Europe to that artificial unity--only dry or drying sticks can be tied into a bundle--which is the decadence of every civilization? How work out upon the phases the gradual coming and increase of the counter movement, the antithetical multiform influx:

> Should Jupiter and Saturn meet,
> O what a crop of mummy wheat!

Then I understand. I have already said all that can be said. The particulars are the work of the thirteenth sphere or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom. Doubtless, for it can do all things and knows all things, it knows what it will do with its own freedom but it has kept the secret.

III

Shall we follow the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand, or mount to that other Heracles, man, not image, he that has for his bride Hebe, "The daughter of Zeus, the mighty, and Hera, shod with gold"?[4]

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4. A Vision (1937), pp. 301-302.

What does all this mean? In Section I Yeats summarily describes the process whereby the revised edition of A Vision came into existence. He sat day after day in his chair playing with his symbol of reality in his mind. Not being confident as to the validity of his symbol, he compared his ideas with those of his predecessors, such as Plato, Plotinus, Empedocles, Hegel, and the Eastern sages, trying to see if his symbol unites all. The list of authorities includes practically all known thinkers of the East and the West who dealt with metaphysics and prophecy. Section II makes the dramatic confession of failure that his labor as described in Section I was rewarded with no vision of reality. Although his conviction about the ultimate reality remains firm, he is barred from the secret of that reality. Section III puts forward in the poet's typically cryptic manner his ambivalent attitude toward the mortal world and the immortal.

What we are given to know in "THE END OF THE CYCLE" is that the whole purpose of writing A Vision was to gain a perfect knowledge of reality. The laborious process of defining and re-defining his terms was in the long run to lead him to a vision, the very title of the book. Yeats deliberately chose a mathematical approach in defining his symbol: a knowledge of reality was to be abstracted from the particulars of phenomena as a mathematical formula is abstracted from particular numbers. In working with mathematical figures, however, Yeats never lost sight of his ultimate objective, that is, to draw himself "up into the symbol" and "find everything in the symbol," forgetting everything that went into the making of that symbol. It is easy enough to see his basic antinomical principle operating in his thinking here. The attainment of knowledge is a spiritual progress from the vision of particulars to

that of reality:

> My instructors identify consciousness with conflict, not with knowledge, substitute for subject and object and their attendant logic a struggle towards harmony, towards Unity of Being. Logical and emotional conflict alike lead towards a reality which is concrete, sensuous, bodily.[5]

Here we see a complementary relationship between the monistic-experiential perspective and the dualistic-cognitive. Consciousness is identical with conflict; and unity is reached through that conflict. The practical way to attain a knowledge of reality is by way of a symbol, a single image distilled from a multiplicity of images.

That unified symbolism whereby a knowledge of reality is attained is called by Yeats the "Unity of Image." It is one of the three kinds of unity with which Yeats was obsessed throughout his life as the ultimate goal of man: the Unity of Being, the Unity of Culture, and the Unity of Image. Briefly explained, the Unity of Being is a personal goal where an individual achieves a momentary contact with the eternal; the Unity of Culture is the goal of every society in which "religious, aesthetic and practical life were one"[6] and where "building, picture, pattern, metal work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image"[7]; the Unity of Image is the goal in national literature which serves as "an originating symbol"[8] whereby the Unity of Culture is evoked. These three kinds of unity are closely related to one another and are indeed

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5. Ibid., p. 214.

6. Ibid., p. 279.

7. Ibid., p. 280.

8. Autobiographies, p. 263.

one and the same thing in the realm of eternity, because the ultimate reality is "neither one nor many" but "phaseless."[9] In human experience and in Yeats's own experience the unity falls into three categories, that is, personality, history, and art. A unity is achieved in both personality and history through art, a single image. Attainability of unity depends, therefore, upon whether the image is the right one or not; hence Yeats's obsession with symbolism:

> Can there be anything so important as to cry out that what we call romance, poetry, intellectual beauty, is the only signal that the supreme Enchanter, or some one in His councils, is speaking of what has been, and shall be again, in the consummation of time.[10]

And

> Nations, races, and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of related images, symbolical or evocative of the state of mind which is, of all states of mind not impossible, the most difficult to that man, race, or nation....[11]

Thus the image is the unifying force of minds and "the drowner of dykes" that separate individuals.

At the base of Yeats's theory of symbolism there is the concept of "Anima Mundi." It would be simply redundant to quote here from Yeats's essay "Magic" the well-known passage that defines his concept of Anima Mundi. Suffice it to say that our individual memories are part of that great memory of nature. Probably the most important premise in connection with the theme of failure is that there is a mystical basis to the idea of the great memory. Through his own study of the country visionaries of Ireland and his association with the Theosophists and the

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9. A Vision (1937), p. 193

10. Essays and Introductions, p. 52.

11. Autobiographies, p. 194.

Cabalists, Yeats arrived at a firm conviction that the great memory can be evoked by symbols. In the essay on Shelley's poetry, which antedates the first version of A Vision by a quarter of a century, Yeats suggests a mystical basis for the evocation of the great memory:

> Any one who has any experience of any mystical state of the soul knows how there float up in the mind profound symbols, whose meaning, if indeed they do not delude one into the dream that they are meaningless, one does not perhaps understand for years. Nor I think has any one, who has known that experience with any constancy, failed to find some day, in some old book or on some old monument, strange or intricate image that had floated up before him, and to grow perhaps dizzy with the sudden conviction that our little memories are but a part of some great Memory that renews the world and men's thoughts age after age, and that our thoughts are not, as we suppose, the deep but a little foam upon the deep.[12]

So a knowledge of the great memory is a mystical experience; but it would be a mistake to think that Yeats is speaking here of his own attainment of experience. For as late as 1922 Yeats confesses that he has not attained the experience. The truth he sought, Yeats says, would come to him "like the subject of a poem, from some moment of passionate experience," but "that passionate experience could never come--of that I was certain--until I had found the right image or right images."[13] It is clear, then, that the knowledge of reality is mystical in nature and that it is brought forth only by a right image or images.

That image he thought he found in the gyre. "But nothing comes," Yeats says at the beginning of Section II of "THE END OF THE CYCLE," "though this moment was to reward me for all my toil."[14] Perhaps he is

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12. Essays and Introductions, p. 79.

13. Autobiographies, p. 269.

14. A Vision (1937), p. 301.

too old, he muses, for something would come when he meditated under the direction of the Cabalists. What are the causes of the failure? One is already suggested at the end of Section I: "Then I draw myself up into the symbol and it seems as if I should know all if I could banish such memories and find everything in the symbol." He could not banish "such memories" of other prophecies. Yeats had warned himself against the danger at the time of writing The Trembling of the Veil (1922)--to fall victim to the "multiplicity of interest and opinion," which stimulated him to conceive a Unity of Culture in the first place.

> I asked no help of books, for I believed that the truth I sought would come to me like the subject of a poem, from some moment of passionate experience, and that if I filled my exposition with other men's thought, other men's investigation, I would sink into all that multiplicity of interest and opinion.[15]

Much earlier than this Yeats had said in the essay, "Symbol of Poetry," that

> One is furthest from symbols when one is busy doing this or that, but the soul moves among symbols and unfolds in symbols when trance, or madness, or deep meditation has withdrawn it from every impulse but its own.[16]

So, truth is not to be attained unless the mind is rid of conflict or multiplicity and brought to a razor-sharp intensity in its meditation. Here the monistic-experiential perspective dominates Yeats's thinking.

Multiplicity and conflict, however, are not to be discarded as completely worthless. Rather, they have an important place in Yeats's thought. Yeats believed that the Unity of Being came through conflict.

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15. Autobiographies, p. 269.

16. Essays and Introductions, p. 162.

In "Hodes Chameliontos," Book III of The Trembling of the Veil, he explains how a "multiplicity of interest and opinion drove him to conceive a Unity of Culture defined and evoked by Unity of Image,"[17] and finds a similarly paradoxical process in the progress of such artists as Dante and Villon. A revelation of truth, Yeats believes, comes from the Anima Mundi, or "that age-long memoried self."[18] By genius is meant a link that connects the individual mind with the Anima Mundi for brief moments. In Yeats's own words: "Genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind."[19]

A man of genius, then, achieves a momentary union of his mundane self with the eternal self. That union, however, is achieved through conflict. The path to eternity is never plain. A man treading that path is confronted with "the greatest obstacle he may confront without despair."[20] In other words, man works his way out of conflict to unity and that conflict serves as fuel for his upward movement. The paradox is universal in the spiritual progress of men. In 1927 Yeats wrote to Mrs. Shakespear and compared the paradox in him and that in Dante:

> Certainly we suck always at the eternal dugs. How well too it puts my own mood between spiritual excitement, and the sexual torture and the knowledge that they are somehow inseparable! It is the eyes of the Earthly Beatrice--she has not yet put on her divinity--that makes Dante risk the fire 'like a child that is offered an apple.' Immediately after comes the Earthly Paradise and the Heavenly Beatrice.[21]

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17. Autobiographies, p. 269.

18. Ibid., p. 272.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Allan Wade, ed., The Letters of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 731.

The eternal is thus found via the earthly. Again in "Hodos Chameliontos" Yeats writes that the personifying spirits of Anima Mundi "contrived Dante's banishment, and snatched away his Beatrice, and thrust Villon into the arms of harlots...that Dante and Villon might through passion become conjoint to their buried selves, turn all to Mask and Image, and so be phantoms in their own eyes."[22] There is tragic beauty and grandeur in such masters, whom we see in awe as men re-born greater in stature:

> We gaze at such men in awe, because we gaze not at a work of art, but at the re-creation of the man through that art, the birth of a new species of man, and it may even seem that the hairs of our heads stand up, because that birth, that re-creation is from terror.[23]

There was a war going on in Dante's mind, Yeats believes; and out of that war with himself Dante created poetry. And like Dante, who had to struggle with his anger at the world and with his lust for Beatrice, Yeats turned his own conflict into creative energy. "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric," Yeats writes in Per Amica Silentia Lunae (1917), "but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry."[24] And this poetry, which Yeats calls tragic poetry, represents a creative endeavor in which the artist can come closest to the saint's vision, as we shall see later.

Another cause of failure lies in the choice of the spiritual objective itself--the whole idea of unity. After the confession of failure in Section II comes a resignation--a resignation to the cyclical movement of nature based on the understanding that a vision of unity, after all, does not mean an attainment of perfect knowledge, a liberation of

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22. Autobiographies, pp. 272-3.

23. Ibid., p. 273.

24. W. B. Yeats, Mythologies, p. 331.

the mortal self. A unity which Europe tries to achieve out of whatever discords there are, after all, is an artificial unity, which Yeats calls "the decadence of every civilization."[25] He believes that a civilization, like a person, goes through a cyclical movement of twelve cycles. As a person is controlled by an invisible Daimon in the Thirteenth Sphere, so a civilization is controlled by a Supreme Enchanter. "All civilization is held together," Yeats says in a diary in 1909, "by the suggestions of an invisible hypnotist--by artificially created illusions."[26] Viewed from the mortal standpoint, a civilization means "a struggle to keep self-control."[27] It represents an almost superhuman effort to maintain a unity and coherence, but the effort is lost in the end and a unity is lost, the whole civilization whirling round in the "widening gyre" of "The Second Coming." Yeats compares a civilization with a tragic hero: "It is like some great tragic person, some Niobe who must display an almost superhuman will or the cry will not touch our sympathy."[28] The struggle, however, comes ultimately to naught, for all civilization is subjected to a gigantic cyclical movement of nature. A time comes to any civilization when the center can no longer hold and "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." Any attempt to keep self-control, therefore, must be frustrated in the end. A civilization must yield itself to fate as a tragic hero must. Yeats had earlier cast doubt over the hope of Europe's ever attaining a Unity of Culture. In "The Tragic Generation" he wrote pessimistically:

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25. A Vision (1937), p. 302.

26. Autobiographies, p. 482.

27. A Vision (1937), p. 268.

28. Ibid.

> I can but remember pipe music to-night, though I can half-hear beyond it in the memory a weightier music, but this much at any rate is certain--the dream of my early manhood, that a modern nation can return to Unity of Culture, is false; though it may be we can achieve it for some small circle of men and women, and there leave it till the moon bring round its century.[29]

Thus a civilization is under the control of a supernatural force; any attempt to free itself from that force is hopeless, "a struggle of the fly in the marmalade"--unless there is a revelation.

Now it is true that Yeats expected some sort of revelation when a civilization completes a cycle, and it seems that he likewise expected a revelation upon completion of A Vision, which ended in disappointment. In Book V of A Vision, "Dove or Swan," Yeats comments on the end of a cycle of a civilization thus:

> The loss of control over thought comes towards the end; first a sinking in upon the moral being, then the last surrender, the irrational cry, revelation--the scream of Juno's peacock.[30]

This is the same revelation that he expects in "The Second Coming":

> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

And it is essentially the same revelation that is envisaged at the level of art in "My Table":

> Our learned men have urged
> That when and where 'twas forged
> A marvelous accomplishment,
> In painting or in poetry, went
> From father unto son
> And through the centuries ran

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29. Autobiographies, p. 295.

30. A Vision (1937), p. 268.

And seemed unchanging like the sword.
Soul's beauty being most adored,
Men and their business took
The soul's unchanging look;
For the most rich inheritor,
Knowing that none could pass Heaven's door
That loved inferior art,
Had such an aching heart
That he, although a country's talk
For silken clothes and stately walk,
Had waking wits; it seemed
Juno's peacock screamed.

The screaming of Juno's peacock never occurred, however, at the end of the cycle of A Vision. Yeats wonders how it is possible to bring about a unity in Europe. Then he understands--that he has said what can be said in words. The rest is up to the thirteenth sphere. The descriptive part of the job is done; what remains is experience itself, a vision of reality, a liberation. That liberation failed to come: the thirteenth sphere "has kept the secret."[31] "Shall we follow," Yeats asks, "the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand"?--a Heracles the mortal hero who was rejected by Hera, or Juno, the owner of the peacock. Or shall we, Yeats offers as an alternative, "mount to that other Heracles, man, not image"[32] who was accepted by Hera as a god and was given Hebe, Hera's daughter by Zeus, for his bride? The choice is between the life of an artist and that of a saint. The choice, again, is between earthly bondage and freedom.[33] From the philosophical standpoint, the choice is between the monistic-experiential perspective and the dualistic-cognitive. Yeats ends his proposition with a question, giving no definite answer. Actually, however, Yeats chose the former;

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31. Ibid., p. 302.

32. Ibid.

33. Elsewhere in A Vision Yeats equates Heracles after death with "the free spirit, a happy god among the gods." (A Vision, p. 226.)

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or rather, he had no choice. Barred from an attainment of a perfect knowledge of reality, Yeats had to walk the way of the artist.

III

Although Yeats found his genius more suitable to the career of an artist than that of a saint, he could not completely abandon his saintly aspirations. As a result, we find a curious type of an artist in Yeats. In Yeats the artist there exists the mask of another Yeats--Yeats the saint. Yeats the artist, who is engaged in the Apollonic pursuit of artistic creation, is constantly haunted by the Dionysian desire for ecstasy. In other words, the dualistic-cognitive perspective of the artist is qualified by the monistic-experiential perspective of the saint.

The world of poetry, indeed, is elevated to the sphere of religion. "I am very religious," Yeats says in Book I of The Trembling of the Veil, "and deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, I had a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and emotions.... I wished for a world where I could discover this tradition perpetually, and not in pictures and in poems only, but in tiles round the chimney piece and in the hangings that kept out the draught."[34] This religion of poetry "would find its manners of devotion in all imaginative literature, and set before Irishmen for special manual an Irish literature which, though made by many minds, would seem the work of a single mind...."[35] The world that Yeats envisages, then, is a kind of

34. Autobiographies, pp. 115-6.

35. Ibid., p. 254.

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religio-aesthetic world, a Byzantium, where men seek a unity--a world unified and made coherent by a single myth. There "all sounds, all colours, all forms...become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet one emotion."[36] There a nation is "distinguished from a crowd of chance comers, bound together"[37] by a Unity of Image. There "the poet seeks truth, not abstract truth, but a kind of vision of reality which satisfies the whole being."[38] The gates of this world would certainly open for him, Yeats thought, as they did for Blake, Swedenborg, and Boehme, the chief mystical authorities he recognized in 1915.[39]

However, as he had felt frustrated in his saintly pursuit, so he felt frustrated in his artistic endeavor as long as he kept the saintly objective.

I suggested in the previous sections that Yeats tried to approach reality through two channels: logic and image. The former involves Yeats's own intellection on reality, a logical, or mathematical, mapping out of heaven;[40] at the same time, it involves a meticulous examination and understanding of wisdom presented by generations of thinkers. The latter, the way of image, is a direct passage to the world of eternity.

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36. Essays and Introductions, pp. 156-7.

37. Autobiographies, p. 263.

38. Letters, p. 588.

39. In his letter to Ernest Boyd, Yeats said: "My chief mystical authorities have been Boehme, Blake and Swedenborg." (Letters, p. 592.)

40. Yeats thought an intellect of Spinoza's type to be an important element of mysticism. In a letter he wrote to his father in June 1918 he said: "Why do you call Bunyan a mystic? It is not possible to make a definition of mysticism to include him. The great mystics of that epoch are Spinoza and Pascal. Nearly all our popular mysticism derives indirectly from the first or from a movement he was first to explain." (Letters, p. 650.)

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In either case, however, there is no escaping dualism. Logic means a process and, therefore, implies conflict, which Yeats identifies with consciousness. Image, on the other hand, is only a symbol of reality, not reality itself.

Of the two gates to reality Yeats concluded logic to be closed forever. That is what he says in Section I of "THE END OF THE CYCLE." Logic only helped him find the image, not reality. The inadequacy of intellection as a means to attain the knowledge of reality was clear to him as early as 1896. In a letter to W. T. Horton, dated May 5, 1896, Yeats writes:

> I hold as Blake would have held also, that the intellect must do its utmost 'before inspiration is possible.' It clears the rubbish from the mouth of the sybil's cave but it is not the sybil.[41]

So intellection is preliminary to inspiration, but no more. The image that symbolizes a laborious intellectual attempt at the attainment of perfect knowledge is found in Thoor Ballylee, the tower which Yeats acquired in 1917 and moved into two years later. The tower, with a winding stair and a ruined top, symbolizes for Yeats human endeavor by generations of great minds toward perfect wisdom. At the personal level it symbolizes Yeats's own endeavor and his life itself.

In his note to The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933), Yeats explains the symbolism of the tower as follows:

> In this book and elsewhere, I have used towers, and one tower in particular, as symbols and have compared their winding stairs to the philosophical gyres, but it is hardly necessary to interpret what comes from the main track of thought and expression. Shelley

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41. Letters, p. 262.

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> uses towers constantly as symbols, and there are gyres in Swedenborg, and in Thomas Aquinas and certain classical authors. Part of the symbolism of Blood and the Moon was suggested by the fact that Thoor Ballylee has a waste room at the top and that butterflies come in through the loopholes and die against the windowpanes.[42]

In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" Yeats makes the tower "Emblematical of the night," a mystical communion with eternity. My Soul urges My Self to quit wandering on earth and concentrate on a spiritual ascent:

> My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
> Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
> Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
> Upon the breathless starlit air,
> Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
> Fix every wandering thought upon
> That quarter where all thought is done:
> Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

The winding stair of Yeats's tower is a symbol of spiritual ascent. Against this symbol, My Self poses a Japanese sword, which was given to Yeats in 1920 by Junzo Sato, a Japanese. The sword together with the rich embroidery on the hilt symbolizes Self's determination to accept his lot on earth. The Soul argues that the sword is an emblem of love (represented by some colorful embroidery torn from a courtlady's dress) and war (represented by the blade), which in turn implies a cyclical movement of birth(love) and death(war). The Soul then urges the Self to "Think of ancestral night that can,/...Deliver from the crime of death and birth." But the Soul, when he comes to describe the world where "intellect no longer knows/ Is from the Ought, or Knower from the Known," he discovers that his "tongue's a stone." The

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42. The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 456.

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Soul suddenly falls into silence and abandons the argument. The Self speaks on and the second section of the poem consists, in effect, of a eulogy of his own philosophy of life. The Soul abandons the argument partly because the sort of experience he is hinting at is incommunicable, but largely because Yeats the poet has almost nothing to say on that experience. The gyre of discord now dominates Yeats's mind and the gyre of concord recedes into the background. It would be a mistake to argue, as Engelberg does, that the Soul loses the argument because "she offers the very permanence Self cannot accept."[43] After all, the poem is about a dialogue, not an argument, taking place between two tendencies in Yeats's mind. For a moment two tendencies were kept in balance, but one represented by the Soul, or the gyre of concord in the terms of A Vision,[44] diminished as the other, the gyre of discord represented by the Self, came to the foreground. The world of eternity, the "quarter where all thought is done," which the Soul desires is the world Yeats's self could never reach; the Self, therefore, resolves to be "content to live it all again/ And yet again, if it be life to pitch/ Into the frog spawn of a blind man's bitch." The Self is the predominant gyre in Yeats's mind. The very eloquence and strongly affirmative tone of the Self shows Yeats's turn of mind--at least at the time of writing the poem.

In "Ego Dominus Tuus" and "The Phases of the Moon" the tower image is used as a symbol of intellectual toil. The inhabitant of the tower

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43. Edward Engelberg, The Vast Design, Patterns in W. B. Yeats's Aesthetic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 177.

44. Yeats has the following to say in the 1937 edition of A Vision(p. 68): "...I see that gyre of 'Concord' diminishes as that of 'Discord' increases, and can imagine after that the gyre of 'Concord' increasing while that of 'Discord' diminishes, and so on, one gyre within the other always. Here the thought of Heraclitus dominates all: 'Dying each other's life, living each other's death.'"

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in "Ego Dominus Tuus" (presumably Yeats himself) leaves the tower because he seeks "an image, not a book." By that image he calls "to the mysterious one," his antiself who will "disclose/ All that I seek." The antiself will whisper a secret knowledge[45] "as though/ He were afraid the birds," the symbol of momentary vision, "Would carry it away to blasphemous men." The inhabitant of the tower in "The Phases of the Moon" has chosen to live in the tower

> Because, it may be, of the candle-light
> From the far tower where Milton's Platonist
> Sat late, or Shelley's visionary prince:
> The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved,
> An image of mysterious wisdom won by toil;

but his toil, Aherne and Robertes know, does not bring him what he seeks. In both poems the tower, which is used as a symbol of intellectual toil, does not satisfy its inhabitant.

In "Blood and the Moon" a more thorough and sophisticated use is made of the tower as a symbol.

> I declare this tower is my emblem; I declare
> This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my
> ancestral stair;
> The Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have travelled
> there.

Thus Yeats would use the tower in the poem--as an emblem of procession of great minds of the past, "A bloody, arrogant power" that "Rose out of the race/ Uttering, mastering" that race. It is an emblem of "The strength that gives our blood and state magnanimity of its own desire,"

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45. "The knowledge of reality," wrote Yeats in 1909, "is always in some measure a secret knowledge. It is a kind of death." (Yeats, "Estrangement," Autobiographies, p. 482.)

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of the great intellectual leaders who endeavored to give the nation a Unity of Culture and who endeavored to give a rational order to the universe. On that "ancestral stair" there is "odour of blood," a suggestion of temporality.[46] This winding stair, which is compared to a philosophical gyre, or "Everything that is not God consumed with intellectual fire," leads to the ruined top of the tower, where "Upon the dusty, glittering windows cling,/ And seem to cling upon the moonlit skies,/ Tortoiseshell butterflies, peacock butterflies." "Is every modern nation like the tower," Yeats muses, "Half dead at the top?" He comes to this awareness, however, that the wisdom that the great minds who climbed the stair sought "is the property of the dead,/ A something incompatible with life" and that the power suggested by the "blood-saturated ground" is, like any earthly thing, "A property of the living." It must be noted how tactfully Yeats reverses the meaning of his symbols here. In stanza II Yeats has the stair stand for a procession of great minds of the past. In this sense the stair is an emblem of the past glory. But then the great minds represent the shaping spirit of the entire Irish race and culture, a vitality. In stanza III blood which smelt on the stair and which saturates the ground stands for the long political struggle that Ireland had to go through, a vainly expended human endeavor. In the final stanza the stair is brought back into life again, for the power belongs to the living. Thus we see the tower in a double-exposure effect: the stair on which Goldsmith, Berkeley, and Burke trod leading to the ruined top, an emblem of the sterile wisdom of the dead, and the stair which the moderns, including Yeats himself,

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46. This is precisely the meaning in which "blood" is used in "Oil and Blood."

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climb spiraling the tower half dead at the top, an emblem of a modern nation. Over the tower hangs the transcendent moon shining with its ancient purity, and "no stain/ Can come upon the visage of the moon."

"Blood and the Moon," then, contrasts the temporal world of struggle and power with the world of eternity. Man toils with his intellect and power upon the stair, which suggests the gyre image of A Vision, but his toil uplifts him only the height of the tower where it comes to the dead end; the best he can do is to "clamour in drunken frenzy for the moon." The poem, furthermore, is a poetic statement of what Yeats must have felt when he completed the second version of A Vision: he climbed the stair--or explored the gyre--but his toil was rewarded with the dead top, only to make him realize that the moon shone far above his head. T. R. Henn notes that Yeats correlated his endeavor in writing A Vision to his desire of restoring the room at the top of the tower.[47] As he was never able to restore the room in life,[48] he never attained his aim in A Vision.

The tower, then, symbolizes for Yeats a frustrated effort in the search for reality; it is, nevertheless, also a symbol of life on earth out of which the stuff of art is derived. It is, furthermore, symbolical of Yeats's later affirmation of the cyclical movement of life and his resolution to be true to it. This is what he had in mind when he wrote in 1923 these lines in "Meditation in Time of Civil War":

> May this laborious stair and this stark tower
> Become a roofless ruin that the owl
> May build in the cracked masonry and cry
> Her desolation to the desolate sky.

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47. T. R. Henn, The Lonely Tower, Studies in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1952), p. 13.

48. Joseph Hone, W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 319.

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The Primum Mobile that fashioned us
Has made the very owls in circles move;
And I, that count myself most prosperous,
Seeing that love and friendship are enough,
For an old neighbour's friendship chose the house
And decked and altered it for a girl's love,
And know whatever flourish and decline
These stones remain their monument and mine.

However desolate it may be, Yeats thought, the tower will endure the times and remain forever a symbol of his life and of the gyre of life out of which man never seems to be able to escape.

If Yeats was aware of the inadequacy of intellect as a path to perfect knowledge, he also felt frequently frustrated in his second approach, symbolism. It was previously noted that for Yeats symbolism meant a direct passage to the world of eternity, for it evoked the great memory. It was also noted, however, that Yeats was finally frustrated by his symbol in A Vision. Yeats is constantly aware of the gulf that lies between reality and symbol. The symbol is nothing unless it evokes reality--unless, in effect, it becomes one with reality. In "Anima Hominis" in Per Amica Silentia Lunae, Yeats distinguishes what he calls "happy art" from tragic art. "All happy art," he says, "seems to me that hollow image [of fulfilled desire, a phrase by Simeon Solomon], but when its lineaments express also the poverty or the exasperation that set its maker to the work, we call it tragic art."[49] The difference is aptly exemplified in Keats and Dante. Keats's art is only a "dream of luxury," which he never attained, but Dante's art is made out of his spiritual conflict and is his spiritual progress itself: "...while reading Dante we never long escape the conflict, partly because the verses are at moments a mirror of his history, and yet more because that history

49. Mythologies, p. 329.

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50. Ibid.

51. Autobi

is so clear and simple that it has the quality of art."[50]

In "Ego Dominus Tuus," which Yeats uses as the title poem in Per Amica Silentia Lunae (1917), Ille, presumably Yeats himself, argues for Dante that

> Being mocked by Guido for his lecherous life,
> Derided and deriding, driven out
> to climb that stair and eat that bitter bread,
> He found the unpersuadable justice, he found
> The most exalted lady loved by a man.

Dante found what he wanted; but what about Keats? Ille's answer is:

> His art is happy, but who knows his mind?
> I see a schoolboy when I think of him,
> With face and nose pressed to sweet-shop window,
> For certainly he sank into his grave
> His senses and his heart unsatisfied,
> And made--being poor, ailing and ignorant,
> Shut out from all the luxury of the world,
> The coarse-bred son of a livery-stable keeper--
> Luxuriant song.

The portion of "Ego Dominus Tuus" on Keats is reproduced at the end of "Hodos Chameliontos" in The Trembling of the Veil (1922) in which he deals with the idea of unity arising from conflict. Toward the end of that essay Yeats again compares Keats with Dante and Villon:

> In great lesser writers like Landor and like Keats we are shown that Image and that Mask as something set apart; Andromeda and her Perseus--though not the sea-dragon--but in a few in whom we recognize supreme masters of tragedy, the whole contest is brought into the circle of their beauty. Such masters--Villon and Dante, let us say--would not, when they speak through their art, change their luck; yet they are mirrored in all the suffering of desire. The two halves of their nature are so completely joined that they seem to labour for their objects, and yet to desire whatever happens, being at the same instant predestinated and free, creation's very self.[51]

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50. Ibid.

51. Autobiographies, p. 273.

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It takes a great artist to fuse the Image and the Mask, to unite poetry and reality, to link creative effort to knowledge, to turn consciousness, in effect, into pure experience. In lesser artists such fusion is impossible. Yeats must have felt in his own art a similar inadequacy. At least, Yeats is always uncertain about the adequacy of his symbols. The instructors that gave him the systems for A Vision gave them in the form of abstract symbols, which were meant to enkindle his imagination and lead him to "a reality which is concrete, sensuous, bodily":

> My imagination was for a time haunted by figures that, muttering "The great systems," held out to me the sun-dried skeletons of birds, and it seemed to me that this image was meant to turn my thoughts to the living bird.[52]

That he did not catch that living bird, Yeats testifies, as it has been repeatedly noted, at the end of A Vision (1937).

There are a number of poems in which the poet or the protagonist expresses his disappointment or impatience over the cleavage between the image and reality. In "Solomon and the Witch" Solomon ascribes a failure of their love to the inadequacy of an image to bring about a resolution of "Choice and Chance." Solomon first explains that the strange sensation that Sheba felt in their sexual union may mean a true resolution of conflict, an announcement by a cockerel, which "Crew from a blossoming apple bough," that "All that the brigand apple brought/ And this foul world were dead at last." When Sheba points out that the foul world has not disappeared, however, Solomon replies:

> If that be so,
> Your cockerel found us in the wrong
> Although he thought it worth a crow.
> Maybe an image is too strong
> Or may be not strong enough.

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52. A Vision (1937), p. 214.

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In a similar context, in "The Hero, the Girl, and the Fool," both the hero and the girl loathe imperfection of their love because the image and the true self are confused as the object of love. They are frustrated because they feel cheated out of their love: the hero loves the girl's beauty, not her; the girl loves the hero's heroism, not him; and a nun that the girl wishes to become is revered for her holiness. The fool, who is by the roadside, comments that a true love is found only when one is completely out of the human context:

> When all workers that have
> From cradle run to grave
> From grave to cradle run instead;
> When thoughts that a fool
> Has wound upon a spool
> Are but loose thread, are but loose thread:
>
> When cradle and spool are past
> And I mere shade at last
> Coagulate of stuff
> Transparent like the wind,
> I think that I may find
> A faithful love, a faithful love.

"Among School Children" is, in one sense, also a study of image and reality. The images, which are taken from the world of Anima Hominis and therefore subject to passage of time, break Yeats's heart, because they are separated, due to time's destructive power, from what they stand for. A sense of change is persistent in the poem. Images wither with time while the "Presences," which are "self-born" and are therefore out of time, mock "man's enterprise." The poem begins with a casual mention of the setting in which Yeats is inspecting a school, but a sense of time is immediately emphasized by a sharp contrast between the innocent children and "A sixty-year-old smiling public man." The children stir Yeats's memory of his youthful love. The "Ledaean body"

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Yeats dreams of may or may not be Maud Gonne; it is beside the point.[53] The Ledaean body with whom Yeats was united "Into the yolk and white of the one shell" suggests Helen, a symbol of eternal beauty and destruction. The process of the lovers' uniting into an egg, of course, is a reversal of Plato's parable of the egg in the Symposium. The bright color of the children's faces, however, is driven away by her present image:

> Her present image floats into the mind—
> Did Quattrocento finger fashion it
> Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind
> And took a mess of shadows for its meat?

If his love is now a withered image, Yeats, too, is now an old scarecrow who is avowedly not "of Ledaean kind." In self-mockery Yeats pictures himself as an image of what stimulates a mother's dreams. In the lines that echo the second song of "At the Hawk's Well," Yeats points up the irony which old age presents to the ideal image that a mother seeks in her son. In his letter to Olivia Shakespear, dated September 24, 1926, Yeats says that the poem is his "last curse upon old age."[54] The poem is a sorrowful comment on the widening gulf that time creates between image and reality.

> What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap
> Honey of generation had betrayed,
> And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape
> As recollection or the drug decide,
> Would think her son, did she but see that shape
> With sixty or more winters on its head,
> A compensation for the pang of his birth,
> Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

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53. The Ledaean body is generally taken for Maud Gonne. Although the context does not require such an association, it can hardly be otherwise, since Maud Gonne is frequently associated with Helen of Troy in other poems. For a contrary view, see Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, p. 183.

54. Letters, p. 719.

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An old man is, thus, a symbol of disillusionment of motherly affection, a withered image of reality. He breaks a mother's heart. The old man in "At the Hawk's Well," who is forever severed from the fountain of eternal youth, would also break his mother's heart if she would see him in his present condition:

> What were his life soon done!
> Would he lose by that or win?
> A mother that saw her son
> Doubled over a speckled shin,
> Cross-grained with ninety years,
> Would cry, 'How little worth
> Were all my hopes and fears
> And the hard pain of his birth!'[55]

In the letter to Olivia Shakespear already referred to, Yeats says that the poem "means that even the greatest men are owls, scarecrows, by the time their fame has come." Thus, the great minds such as Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, who try to find order in the flux of reality, are also subject to time, "Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird." Yeats does not include himself in the list of the great minds in this stanza, but the reader cannot but sense the irony of the poet himself who tried all his life to gain the secret from the depth of eternity but was constantly and finally thrown back on the strand of time, where he could only curse old age.

Stanza VII discusses Yeats's last category of images in the poem and suddenly erupts into a series of emotional utterances directed to the "Presences." The stanza runs into the next and final stanza in thought and syntax. To separate the stanzas, it seems to me, is to commit a serious critical error. It seems to misinterpret what Yeats

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55. Yeats, The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 137.

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VII

Both nuns and mothers worship images,
But those the candles light are not as those
That animate a mother's reveries,
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.
And yet they too break hearts--O Presences
The passion, piety or affection knows,
And that all heaverly glory symbolise—
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

VIII

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
O Chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

The first four lines of stanza VII, and the fifth except "O Presences," deal with the last category of images Yeats presents in the poem. The divine images that nuns worship are different from those that mothers worship in that they do not grow old: they "keep a marble or a bronze repose." And yet they are similar to those that mothers worship in that "they too break hearts." Here ends Yeats's enumeration of images that "break hearts." Then comes an eruption of emotional utterances, "O Presences," etc. The remainder of stanza VII is an apostrophe to supernatural beings, Daimons of the thirteenth sphere. The stanza ends with a semicolon, which means that the syntactic structure and the thought content of stanza VII continue uninterruptedly to the following and final stanza. If we separate the stanzas, then we must take what the final stanza says as Yeats's "final justification of

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life" that "the poem constructs from the destructive ravage of time,"[56] or as "a proclamation that the body must not be bruised to pleasure the Soul (which is for Yeats that which seeks abstraction), and what matters is the instinctive joy of life symbolized by the chestnut tree in blossom and the body swayed to music."[57] The stanza is addressed rather to the Daimons, "self-born mockers of man's enterprise," than to the reader; it represents, rather, Yeats's prayer that the image and reality be fused.

Stanza VIII, then, is not a vision of reality that he gained out of his contemplation of conflict, nor is it a statement of triumph of his self over the soul. It is rather an expression of his frustration in reaching his spiritual goal. That is why the apostrophe to the "Presences" in the middle of stanza VII is so abrupt: Yeats's sustained emotion can no longer be checked.

And yet they too break hearts---O Presences

It is a Dantesque search for unity. It is a tragic cry in the Yeatsian sense. Yeats is crying like the tragic person he writes about in A Vision, "some great tragic person, some Niobe who must display an almost superhuman will or the cry will not touch our sympathy."[58] A similar cry, though much less tragic, is uttered by the old man of "Sailing to Byzantium."

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56. John Unterecker, A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats (New York: The Noonday Press, 1961), p. 192. It is difficult for me to see how the poem constructs such a justification.

57. Bowra, op. cit., p. 212. Professor Bowra's conclusion comes from the premise that in Yeats the struggle between Soul and Self was terminated in the triumph of the latter. Professor Bowra seems to forget that Yeats always associated Self with conflict. Stanza VIII is about a resolution of conflict.

58. A Vision (1937), p. 268.

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"Sailing to Byzantium" is another "curse" of Yeats's on old age. The aging protagonist, who looks upon himself to be "a paltry thing,/ A tattered coat upon a stick" (another scarecrow image), leaves the world of time, where "Those dying generations" are "at their song," because the Soul does not sing for "its mortal dress." He has therefore "sailed the seas and come/ To the holy city of Byzantium." In the city of Byzantium images have eternal life, not being subject to the destructive power of time. He prays to the sages of the city:

> gather me
> Into the artifice of eternity.

"Once out of nature" he will take his image not from natural, perishable things, but from some work of art that transcends time.

> 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.

It is significant that the old man is not aspiring to be pure soul; he is not by any means choosing the soul against the Self. Even in the natural world of time he has the soul; but that soul does not "sing/ For every tatter in its mortal dress," that is, the soul and the image are not united. What the old man loathes is the fact that in the natural world "Monuments of unageing intellect" are neglected and art studies only the "Monuments of its own magnificence." He therefore came to the holy city of Byzantium and asks the sages of the city, who stand "in God's holy fire/ As in the gold mosaic of a wall," to gather him "Into the artifice of eternity." What the old

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man seeks, then, is an eternal image, not the soul.

In "Byzantium," a sister piece to "Sailing to Byzantium," Yeats is again chiefly concerned with image. What floats before the poet is an image which has nothing that man is; it is "Shade more than man, more image than a shade." This image, unlike the scarecrow of "Among School Children" or "Sailing to Byzantium," is a walking mummy that "May unwind the winding path" and summon the spirits that have come across the seas to the holy city of Byzantium. This image, which Yeats calls "death-in-life and life-in-death," is equivalent to the sages of "Sailing to Byzantium" whom the old man asks to "Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre/ And be the singing-masters of my soul." The next image that floats in Yeats's mind is an eternal image of a golden bird, which previously appeared in "Sailing to Byzantium," and which is now amplified in meaning in the present poem. As Ursla Bridge, John Unterecker, and Curtis Bradford have noted, Yeats, stimulated by Sturge Moore's criticism, felt that the image needed an explanation. The meaning of the golden bird is clarified in the present poem.

> Miracle bird or golden handiwork,
> More miracle than bird or handiwork,
> Planted on the star-lit golden bough,
> Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
> Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
> In glory of changeless metal
> Common bird or petal
> And all complexities of mire or blood.

The bird is not merely a work of art, but is a supernatural bird that mocks mortality.

Against these supernatural images Yeats juxtaposes the images of the "blood-begotten spirits," which come in flood on the back of dolphins to Byzantium to dance. The flood, "That dolphin-torn, that gong-

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61. Ibid.,

tormented sea," is broken by "The golden smithies of the Emperor and by the "Marbles of the dancing floor" of Byzantium. It must be noted that the "blood-begotten spirits" sail across the sea and come to the holy city like the old man in the earlier poem.

Both "Sailing to Byzantium" and "Byzantium," then, have essentially the same theme. They both envisages a sailing--a sailing from the land of withering images to the land of eternal image, a sailing originated in and motivated by Yeats's mistrust of temporal images. "The imaginative deals with spiritual things symbolized by natural things," Yeats wrote to George Russel about 1900,[59] but in the symbols taken from nature he only half believed.

In natural things Yeats only half believed. Yet he continued to sing. Although he is aware of the limitations of the poet, sing he must. In "Anima Hominis" he wrote:

> ...we (the poet) sing amid our uncertainty; and, smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty by the knowledge of our solitude our rhythm shudders.[60]

His resolution for creative endeavor is accompanied by this realization:

> I think that we who are poets and artists, not being permitted to shoot beyond the tangible, must go from desire to weariness and so to desire again, and live but for the moment when vision comes to our weariness like terrible lightning, in the humility of the brutes. ...We seek reality with the slow toil of our weakness and are smitten from the boundless and the unforeseen. Only when we are saints or sage, and renounce experience itself, can we, in imagery of the Christian Cabbala, leave the sudden lightning and the path of the serpent and become the bowman who aims his arrow at the centre of the sun.[61]

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59. Letters, p. 343.

60. Mythologies, p. 331.

61. Ibid., p. 340.

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The poets and the artists, then, are bound by the cyclical movement of the gyre and cannot seem to get out of it. The confession that Yeats makes in "The Circus Animals' Desertion" is essentially the same as the two-fold realization of "Anima Hominis." In that poem he looks back on his career as an artist and confesses that he was infatuated with images, not what they stood for.

> Players and painted stage took all my love,
> And not those things that they were emblems of.

They represented a ladder from "hodos chameliontos" to "Anima Mundi." Now that these images are gone he can only enumerate old themes, or be content with the heart. That is the artist's lot and he must accept it:

> Those masterful images because complete
> Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
> A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
> Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
> Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
> Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
> I must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

He must pursue, to return to the last section of A Vision, "the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand," if he cannot "mount to that other Heracles, man not image, he that has for his bride Hebe...."

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CHAPTER THREE

Brahman and Daimon

I

The main conern of Yeats the saint was the soul and its liberation. A Vision was, as I have affirmed in the previous chapter, a culmination of his life-long effort in search of the soul's freedom. His meeting with the East was almost inevitable and it doubtless left a significant mark in his mind. Throughout his works Yeats makes frequent reference to Oriental thought, especially Indian and Japanese. As a number of Yeats scholars have noted, the East had a profound influence upon the progress of the poet. Especially, Indian thought contributed greatly to his cosmology, as Naresh Guha has pointed out,[1] and the Japanese Noh to his dramatic theory and practice.

Yeats's debt to the East, however, has been considerably exaggerated by those critics whose active interest is in hunting Yeats's sources. On the other hand, another line of criticism completely denies Yeats's debt to the East and establishes him as a genuinely Western thinker and poet. Either criticism distorts, in my opinion, the true meaning of Yeats's encounter with the East,[2] and therefore misses the possibility that a study

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1. Naresh Guha, W. B. Yeats: an Indian Approach (An unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1962).

2. There is a recent tendency among Yeats's critics to lay more emphasis on the confirmatory rather than the initiatory aspect of Yeats's schooling in Eastern thought and art. These critics believe that Yeats had reached his conclusions long before he came to know Eastern thought and art, in which he only sought an authority for his ideas and beliefs. I am in sympathy with this view, though I think that the problem is far more complex than these critics would have us believe.

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of the relationship offers in the way of illuminating Yeats's thought and art.

Yeats was neither an Eastern convert nor a typical Westerner whose way of thinking was antithetical to the Eastern mode of thinking which is broadly termed as "mysticism." Yeats should be placed among the ranks of such Western thinkers as Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Swedenborg, and Boehme, whose mode of thinking was characterized by the double perspective of the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive. He should also be placed in the tradition of Western occulatism represented by the Cabala and the Hermes. Yeats's meeting with the East is most profitably studied with this context in mind, for we should not erroneously credit Indian sources for what Yeats may have learned from European sources: Yeats's concept of sexual union as a mystical experience (a resolution of conflict), for instance, may well have been inspired by the Cabala as well as by the Tantric system of India.[3] Moreover, we can profit from the study of Yeats's relationship with Eastern thought by discovering discrepancies that exist between the two, which will in turn illuminate for us the nature of Yeats's thought and art.

It is outside the scope of this study to consider Yeats in the tradition of Western thought. The purpose of the present study is to see in a synchronic fashion how the East influenced Yeats. By discovering what he accepted and rejected or missed in Eastern thought, we may come close to the essence of Yeats's thought.

Yeats's meeting with Indian thought dates back to his late teens,

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3. Naresh Guha, for instance, credits the Tantric sources for Yeats's idea on sexual union in his later poetry to the exclusion of the Cabalistic source. See his doctoral dissertation, pp. 128ff.

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when he started reading sacred books of India under the influence of his mystic friends including George Russel (AE). In 1885, at the age of twenty, he organized with Charlie Johnston the Hermetic Society with a view to promoting Oriental religions and theosophy generally. In the following year Yeats met a Bengali Brahmin, Babu Mohini Chatterji, who visited Dublin at the time when the Theosophical Lodge was being founded. The Brahmin, who possessed a vast knowledge of Indian as well as Western philosophy and religion, fascinated Yeats and left in his mind ideas that haunted him for years. His new ideas found their expression in "The Indian upon God," "The Indian to his love," "The Sad Shepherd," "Kanva on Himself," and "Anashuya and Vijaya."

In 1887 Yeats joined the Theosophical Society and came to be closely associated with Madam Blavatsky after reading her The Secret Doctrine. He was soon admitted into the esoteric section of the Society, which was composed of devout students who gathered to study the tables of oriental symbolism.

In 1890 Yeats withdrew from the Theosophical Society and passed into Macgregor Mathers's Order of the Golden Dawn and thence devoted himself to the study of magic and spiritism. By joining the Order, Yeats severed himself from the Dublin group of visionaries and was never to return to it or any other organized group of such visionaries.

Yeats's interest in Eastern thought never waned, however. Through his association with Tagore, Shri Purohit, and Michio Ito, and by reading books of Indian philosophy, such as The Yoga System of Patanjali and the Upanishads, and the Noh of Japan translated by Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, Yeats kept his interest in the East fresh. This interest found its artistic expression in a series of Noh-like dramas which he wrote in the several years after he was introduced to the

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4. Autobiog

5. Ibid., p.

genre by his secretary, Ezra Pound, in 1913. It also found its expression in the translation of the ten principal Upanishads in collaboration with Shri Purohit and in a series of introductions to and essays on Indian books.

Yeats's interest in the East was always stirred by his saintly aspirations. The monistic-experiential pole of his perspective provided the motive and energy for taking interest in mysticism and Eastern thought. In Reveries over Childhood and Youth he places the thought of his father, a follower of John Stuart Mill, in an antithetical position to mysticism, and confesses that he could not break away from his father's influence until he became familiar with mysticism:

> It was only when I began to study psychical research and mystical philosophy that I broke away from my father's influence. He had been a follower of John Stuart Mill and so had never shared Rossetti's conviction that it mattered to nobody whether the sun went round the earth or the earth round the sun. But through this new research, this reaction from popular science, I had begun to feel that I had allies for my secret thought.[4]

And he soon angered his father by giving a definition of truth contrary to Mill's, which emphsizes validity of sensations:

> I was soon to vex my father by defining truth as 'the dramatically appropriate utterance of the highest man.' And if I had been asked to define the 'highest man,' I would have said perhaps, 'We can but find him as Homer found Odysseus when he was looking for a theme.'[5]

Yeats's approach to Madam Blavatsky was also motivated by the same monistic-experiential aspirations. Although his meeting with Madam Blavatsky had been prepared by his youthful enthusiasm over Indian

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4. Autobiographics, p. 89.

5. Ibid., p. 90.

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philosophy in general and his interest in theosophy in particular, it was directly motivated by his desire to find out whether the Russian theosophist was an Ahasuerus, the Jew in Shelley's Hellas, of whom

> ...'tis said his tribe
> Dream, and are wise interpreters of dreams.[6]

The Dublin Theosophists had already affirmed to Yeats the real existence of the Jew and Yeats "saw nothing against his reality." So, when Madam Blavatsky came to Dublin, he decided "to look the matter up," for he had a firm conviction that there were some people who could see into the hidden reality of things and reveal it to ordinary men as Ahasuerus the Jew did to Mahmud the Sultan:

> Certainly if wisdom existed anywhere in the world it must be in some lonely mind admitting no duty to us, communing with God only, conceding nothing from fear or favour. Have not all peoples, while bound together in a single mind and taste, believed that such men existed and paid them that honour, or paid it to their mere shadow, which they have refused to philanthropists and to men of learning?[7]

Yet Madam Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society did not satisfy Yeats's expectations wholly, for he was asked to leave the Society when his desire for immediate experience of vision became stronger than the circle had permitted. Although Yeats admits that he did not separate himself from the Society by his own will, his disappointment in the "esoteric teachings" of Madam Blavatsky is clear. He had been tired of abstraction and wanted experience itself; that was why he started experimenting in ways contrary to the policies of the Society:

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6. Hellas, 135-136. Thomas Hutchinson, The Complete Poetical Works of Shelley, Clarendon Press, 1904, P. 500.

7. Autobiographics, p. 173.

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8. Ibid., p.

9. Ibid., p.

10. Ibid.

> I had learned from Blake to hate all abstraction, and, irritated by what were called 'esoteric teaching,' I began a series of experiments.[8]

Ironically, however, this abstraction is in fact what he enthrals himself to in A Vision and is what prevents him from attaining the secret knowledge of the Thirteenth Cone.

Yeats thought that abstraction held another danger for him as an artist. If an artist is wholly given to abstraction, he is likely to forget the world he lives in and his creative work will become weak and vague. While he was engaged in psychic research and the study of mysticism, Yeats was always aware of the danger, because he thought:

> ...it was my business in life to be an artist and a poet, and that there could be no business comparable to that. I refused to read books and even to meet people who excited me to generalization....[9]

He was so afraid of abstraction that he "began to pray that (his) imagination might somehow be rescued from abstraction and become preoccupied with life as had been the imagination of Chaucer."[10]

Indian thought provided for Yeats profound wisdom and inspiration, but, at the same time, it contained a real danger if it was misused. If it brought about a true vision of reality as it promised, nothing more could be desired; however, if it gave no more than formless theory of reality, then a complete immersion in it would mean ruin for an artist. Yeats's attitude toward Indian thought is therefore ambivalent. He takes a negative attitude toward it when his artist's impulse, or the

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8. Ibid., p. 181.

9. Ibid., p. 188.

10. Ibid.

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11. Letters,

12. Joseph Ho
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dualistic-cognitive perspective, is strong, and a positive attitude when his saint's impulse, or the monistic-experiential perspective, is strong. In a letter to Florence Farr, written probably in February 1906 when he was tired of his "vague desires" and was inclined to follow the Apollonian impulse of art, he wrote negatively of the quiescent nature of Indian meditations:

> I have myself by the by begun eastern meditations--of your sort, but with the object of trying to lay hands upon some dynamic and substantializing force as distinguished from the eastern quiescent and supersensualizing state of the soul--a movement downwards upon life, not upwards out of life.[11]

Much later in his life, in a conversation with an Indian, Professor Bose and Dr. Wilbraham Trench of Trinity College, Yeats complained that Tagore wrote "too much about God." He said: "My mind resents the vagueness of such references. Another sort of mysticism which is harmful to poetry is that of Peter Bell and the primrose." Falling back on his tragic theory, he then added: "I have fed upon the philosophy of the Upanishads all my life, but there is an aspect of Tagore's mysticism that I dislike. I find absence of tragedy in Indian poetry." When he was asked if he had any message to India, he said: "Let 100,000 men of one side meet the other. That is my message to India, insistence upon the antinomy." He then strode across the room, and taking up and unsheathing dramatically Sato's Japanese sword, shouted, "Conflict, more conflict."[12]

The dualistic-cognitive perspective did not, however, dominate

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11. Letters, p. 469.

12. Joseph Hone, W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939, London: Macmillan, 1962, pp. 458-9.

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Yeats's mind constantly. There were moments when he aspired for direct experience of oneness with reality. Especially when in 1931 he met an Indian monk, Shri Purohit Swami, in London, his old enthusaism for Indian thought was reawakened. He helped Shri Purohit to translate ten principal Upanishads and wrote an introduction to them when they were published by Faber and Faber in 1937. He also advised Shri Purohit to write his autobiography, which he thought, after reading it in manuscript form, represented "the reality of which the theosophists have dreamed."[13] The meeting with the Indian monk touched off Yeats's meditations about Indian thought, which resulted in a series of essays and introductions. They are, "Introduction" to An Indian Monk by Shri Purohit (1932), "Introduction" to The Holy Mountain by Bhagawan Shri Hamsa (1934), "The Mandudya Upanishad" (1935), "Preface" to The Ten Principal Upanishads (1937) translated by Shri Purohit Swami and W. B. Yeats, and "Introduction" to Aphorisms of Yoga (1938) translated into English by Shri Purohit Swami. In this series of essays Yeats definitely links his system and Indian thought.

II

In an essay entitled "A General Introduction for my Work," written for a complete edition of his works which was never produced, Yeats briefly mentions how A Vision came about. He reveals two motivations in writing it. One was a conviction that "in two or three generations it will become generally known that the mechanical theory has no reality."[14]

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13. Letter to Olivia Shakespear, postmarked March 10, 1932. Letters, p. 794.
14. Essays and Introductions, p. 518.

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Guha, O

The other was his belief in the unity of all mythologies knitting the natural and the supernatural together. This unity was concrete and tangible, not an abstract theory intellectually formulated nor a distant world subject to knowledge. Yeats's firm faith in this unity subconsciously motivated the writing of A Vision:

> I was born into this faith, have lived in it, and shall die in it; my Christ, a legitimate deduction from the Creed of St. Patrick as I think, is that Unity of Being Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body, Blake's 'Imagination,' what the Upanishads have named 'Self': nor is this unity distant and therefore intellectually understandable, but imminent, differing from man to man and age to age, taking upon itself pain and ugliness, 'eye of newt, and toe of frog.'
> Subconscious preoccupation with this theme brought me A Vision, its harsh geometry an incomplete interpretation.[15]

What Yeats emphasizes in this passage is immediacy of experience and knowledge. His Christ was to be "not shut off in dead history, but flowing, concrete, phenomenal."[16] A Vision was written with a view to knowing this Christ immediately, concretely, and permanently. But Christ failed to appear before Yeats, as he confessed at the end of the book, because he could not allow himself to be absorbed into the symbol completely. The Thirteenth Cone remained silent, allowing the whole book to lapse into geometric abstraction that he wished to avoid so much.

It has been argued that Yeats detested the tendency of abstraction in the Upanishads;[17] however, in his consideration of reality and freedom of man's soul, Yeats falls into that very Upanishadic abstraction. Moreover, he says very little in A Vision about how ultimate freedom is brought

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Guha, op. cit., p. 54.

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about in man's soul. It is only after he has read Shri Purohit's autobiography and his master's book that we begin to hear Yeats's comments on the subject. As Yeats refers to the content of A Vision as "the system,"[18] or "my public philosophy,"[19] the book may, as far as its visionary aspect is concerned, be regarded as an Upanishad without a Brahmanic vision. In Section V of A Vision (1937), Yeats admits that his "instructors" revealed to him very little about the ultimate reality and that it cannot be known but only symbolized. What his "instructors" communicated to him, therefore, is largely about the phenomenal world rather than the secret of the ultimate reality:

> My instructors, keeping as far as possible to the phenomenal world, have spent little time upon the sphere, which can be symbolised but cannot be known, though certain chance phrases show that they have all the necessary symbols.[20]

Thus, A Vision offers to us very little about the ultimate reality and the soul's escape into that reality, and is characteristically devoid of that personal vision which the title of the book envisages as its goal. The book concentrates, intead, on history and civilization, and the souls in this world which Yeats views as antinomical. The book is most incomplete, as Yeats admits, in its consideration of the soul and its destiny.[21]

The ultimate reality for Yeats is found in what he calls the "Thirteenth Cone." From scattered passages referring to the Thirteenth Cone

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18. Letters, p.

19. Ibid., p.

20. A Vision (1937), p. 193.

21. Ibid., p. 23.

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we can reconstruct what constitutes Yeats's idea of the ultimate reality and its significance to the soul's freedom. When the passages are pieced together into a consistent whole, there emerges the crux of the whole cosmological concept of Yeats.

The idea of the Thirteenth Cone subsumes the Heraclitian concept of a continuity of life and the Orphic dualism of the personal God and the estranged individual souls. However, it most characteristically assumes the Upanishadic mode of thinking. The Upanishads view the ultimate reality, or the Brahman, from two viewpoints: the transcendental and the relative. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad defines two forms of the Absolute, or Brahman:

> 1. There are two forms of Brahman, the material and the immaterial, the mortal and the immortal, the solid and the fluid, sat (being) and tya (that), (i.e. sat-tya, true).
>
> 2. Everything except air and sky is material, is mortal, is solid, is definite. The essence of that which is material, which is mortal, which is solid, which is definite is the sun that shines, for he is the essence of sat (the definite).
>
> 3. But air and sky are immaterial, are immortal, are fluid, are indefinite. The essence of that which is immaterial, which is immortal, which is fluid, which is indefinite is the person in the disk of the sun, for he is the essence of tyad (the indefinite). So far with regard to the Devas.[22]

The transcendental Brahman is the Absolute One which pervades the whole universe and yet transcends it. Let us see how the Upanishads describe it.

First of all, the Upanishads speak of the transcendental Brahman as devoid of any qualifying attributes. Since attributes are necessarily of the world of relativity, the Absolute One, which is without a

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22. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, II, iii, 1-3. Max Muller, The Upanishads, Vol. II, New York: Dover Publications, 1962, p. 107.

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23. Ibid.,

24. Vagasa
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25. Svetas
p. 237

second, are without them. It cannot be known except by negation. In a famous conversation between Yagnavalkya and his wife, in which the wife is bewildered about the meaning of Brahman, the husband explains that relative knowledge is possible only in the phenomenal world and that the Absolute is known only negatively:

> 15. 'For when there is as it were duality, then one sees the other, one smells the other, one tastes the other, one salutes the other, one hears the other, one perceives the other, one touches the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all this, how should he see another, how should he smell another, how should he taste another, how should he salute another, how should he hear another, how should he touch another, how should he know another: How should he know Him by whom he knows all this: That Self is to be described by No, no![23]

Vagasaneyi-Samhita (Isha) Upanishad describes Brahman as swifter than human thought:

> 4. That one (the Self), though never stirring, is swifter than thought. The Devas (senses) never reached it, it walked before them. Though standing still, it overtakes the others who are running. Matrisvan (the wind, the moving spirit) bestows powers on it.[24]

The unknowable Brahman is all-pervasive of the universe. Svetasvatra Upanishad has the following description:

> 16. (If he looks) for the Self that pervades everything, as butter is contained in milk, and the roots whereof are self-knowledge and penance. That is the Brahman taught by the Upanishad.[25]

This all-pervasive Brahman is all-inclusive as well:

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23. Ibid., p. 185.

24. Vagasaneyi-Samhita Upanishad, 4. Max Muller, The Upanishads, Vol. 1, p. 311.

25. Svetasvatara Upanishad, I, 16. Max Muller, The Upanishads, Vol. II, p. 237.

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1. Manifest, near, moving in the cave (of the heart) is the great Being. In it everything is centred which ye know as moving, breathing, and blinking, as being and not-being, as adorable, as the best, that is beyond understanding of creatures.

2. That which is brilliant, smaller than small, that on which the worlds are founded and their inhabitants, that is the indestructible Brahman, that is the breath, speech, mind; that is the true, that is the immortal.

9. In the highest golden sheath there is the Brahman without passions and without parts. That is pure, that is the light of lights, that is it which they know who know the Self.[26]

Brahman thus exists within and outside the universe at the same time. It includes and transcends the phenomenal world as we conceive it. From the transcendental standpoint, therefore, there is no universe other than Brahman. Brahman is thus non-dual, absolute existence.

Since Brahman is the One without a second, free from the law of cause and effect, including and pervading all, the created world does not really exist. To the illumined, Brahman itself is the ultimate reality, the world of duality being mere illusion. That illusion, however, is created by Brahman itself. By means of its own inscrutable power, called maya, the transcendental Brahman appears in the world of relativity as a knowable entity endowed with attributes:

1. He, the sun, without any colour, who with set purpose by means of his power (sakti) produces endless colours, in whom all this comes together in the beginning, and comes asunder in the end--may he, the god, endow us with good thoughts.

9. That from which the maker (mayin) sends forth all this--the sacred verses, the offerings, the sacrifices, the penances, the past, the future, and all that the Vedas declare--in that the other is bound up through that maya.

10. Know then Prakriti (nature) is Maya (art), and the great Lord the Mayin (maker); the whole world is filled with what are his members.

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26. Mundaka Upanishad, II, ii, 1-2, 9. Ibid., pp. 36-7.

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19. No one has grasped him above, or across, or in the middle. There is no image of him whose name is Great Glory.

20. His form cannot be seen, no one perceives him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know him thus abiding in the heart, become immortal.[27]

Things of the phenomenal world are thus conceived to emanate from the Absolute One, who is transcendental and cannot be seen. Yet the Absolute One is the home to which everything returns:

7. And, O friend, as birds to a tree to roost, thus all this rests in the Highest Atman, --[28]

8. The earth and its subtile elements, the water and its subtile elements, the light and its subtile elements, the air and its subtile elements, the ether and its subtile elements; the eye and what can be seen, the ear and what can be heard, the nose and what can be smelled, the taste and what can be tasted, the skin and what can be touched, the voice and what can be spoken, the hands and what can be grasped, the feet and what can be walked, the mind and what can be perceived, intellect (buddhi) and what can be conceived, personality and what can be personified, thought and what can be thought, light and what can be lighted up, the Prana and what is to be supported by it.

9. For he it is who sees, hears, smells, tastes, perceives, conceives, acts, he whose essence is knowledge, the person, and he dwells in the highest, indestructible Self,--[29]

The indestructible, causeless Brahman is, then, the source and the destination of all forms and names of the phenomenal world. What appears to us as real is a shadow of reality which is created by the magical power of Brahman, called maya. Brahman thus creates and does not create the phenomenal world. It pervades and transcends the created world. By creating the phenomenal world it does not lose its non-dual nature; it

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27. Svetasvatara Upanishad, IV, 1,9,10,19,20. Ibid., pp. 249,251,253,254.

28. The identity of Atman with Brahman will be discussed later.

29. Prasna Upanishad, V, 7, 8, 9. Ibid., pp. 280-81.

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always remains one. Thus the seeming dualism of the Vedantic metaphysic is resolved into non-dualism as salt and water are fused into salt water.

Before we wander too far into the maze of the Vedantic wisdom, let us return to Yeats and see how his idea of the ultimate reality compares with the Vedantic concept.

Like the Upanishads, Yeats also views the ultimate reality from two standpoints: the transcendental and the relative. Viewed from the transcendental standpoint, the ultimate reality is called the Thirteenth Sphere. It is called a Sphere because it is phaseless. Yeats divided the historical process of the time-world into twelve cycles. Each cycle is a cone because it consists of antinomies. The Thirteenth Sphere transcends the twelve historical cycles. Viewed from the relative standpoint, however, the ultimate reality is a cone and the spiritual antithesis of the historical cycles and incarnate daimons. It is reflected in each lesser cycle of the time-world. Thus, Yeats's Thirteenth Cone or Sphere is both transcendental and relative as Brahman is. Its transcendental nature cannot be perceived or described by a person living in the world of relativity. It can best be symbolized:

> I speak of the Thirteenth Cone as a sphere and yet I might say that the gyre or cone of the Principles is in reality a sphere, though to Man, bound to birth and death, it can never seem so, and that it is the antinomies that force us to find it a cone. Only one symbol exists, though the reflecting mirrors make many appear and all different.[30]

The ultimate reality transcends all relativity, all conflict and all knowledge. It is, in other words, non-dual entity; and this is the reason why it cannot be known by the creature of the relative world:

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30. A Vision (1937), p. 240.

> The ultimate reality because neither one nor many, concord nor discord, is symbolized as a phaseless sphere, but as all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience it becomes, the moment it is thought of, what I shall presently describe as the thirteenth cone. All things are present as an eternal instant to our Daimon (or Ghostly Self as it is called, when it inhabits the sphere), but that instant is of necessity unintelligible to all bound to the antinomies.[31]

The creature of this time-world can only see things antinomically and therefore cannot know the ultimate reality which transcends the world of antinomies. The unintelligibility of the ultimate reality is the key idea of Yeats and must be clearly understood and remembered in order to understand his thought. The confession of failure at the end of A Vision is not an artistic gesture nor an abandonment of Vedantic philosophical abstraction; it is a statement of his epistemological belief. This belief, of course, strengthened his position as an artist, for it justifies the artist's work that falls in the domain of symbols. Vendler's equation of the Thirteenth Cone with Phase Fifteen is based on two misunderstandings of Yeats's concept of the ultimate reality. Yeats never placed, as Vendler believes he did, the Thirteenth Cone in the mind, nor Phase Fifteen in a form of created art.[32]

The non-dual ultimate reality is not an abstract idea, but a dynamic energy which is free from causal and other relationships. Its relative and causal aspects are only in our human perception:

> The Thirteenth Cone is a sphere sufficient to itself; but as seen by Man it is a cone. It becomes even conscious of itself as so seen, like some great dancer, the perfect flower of modern culture, dancing some primitive dance and conscious of his or her own life and the dance.[33]

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31. Ibid., p. 193.

32. Vendler, op. cit., p. 69.

33. A Vision (1937), p. 241

The ultimate reality as a personal, dynamic entity assumes an antithetical position to the antinomies of the phenomenal world. It is the spiritual destination of all creatures of the phenomenal world, for whom entering into the "sphere" means to attain freedom, a deliverance from the cycle of birth and death:

> It is that cycle which may deliver us from the twelve cycles of time and space. The cone which intersects ours is a cone in so far as we think of it as the antithesis to our thesis, but if the time has come for our deliverance it is the phaseless sphere, sometimes the Thirteenth Sphere, for every lesser cycle contains within itself a sphere that is, as it were, the reflection or messenger of the final deliverance. Within it live all souls that have been set free and every Daimon and Ghostly Self; our expanding cone seems to cut through its gyre; spiritual influx is from its circumference, animate life from its centre.[34]

This brief passage, which touches on the meaning of the ultimate reality in connection with the soul's freedom, brings in ideas from three different sources that are conspicuous among others in the making of A Vision. The idea of nonduality of the ultimate reality comes from the Vedantic sources, which emphasize the all-inclusive and all-pervasive and attributeless (phaseless in Yeats's language) Brahman as the sole reality. However, this phaseless sphere is the antithesis to the antinomies of the phenomenal world--an idea which Yeats obviously borrowed from Heraclitus, to whom life was a continuous flow in which death meant only a renewal of life and in which life and death were in complementary relationship. Yeats borrowed the idea of the interlocking gyres from Heraclitus. Explaining his fundamental symbol, Yeats said in A Vision: "Here the thought of Heraclitus dominates all: 'Dying each other's life, living each other's death.'"[35] Heraclitus

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34. Ibid., p. 210.

35. A Vision, p. 68.

used the expression to explain the relationship of the mortal world and the immortal: "Immortals become mortals, mortals become immortals; they live in each other's death and die in each other's life.[36] Yeats brings the phrase back into its original context to explain his own idea of the ultimate reality and the phenomenal world. Heraclitus, however, condemned plurality of the ultimate reality. There was for him one continuous Being and therefore one logos: "We should let ourselves be guided by what is common to all. Yet, although the Logos is common to all, most men live as if each of them had a private intelligence of his own."[37] Thus, it is not right, according to Heraclitus, to distinguish modes of life: "It is one and same thing to be living or dead, awake or sleep, young or old. The former aspect in each case becomes the latter, and the latter again the former, by sudden unexpected reversal."[38] According to Yeats, the souls have their antithetical daimons in the Thirteenth Cone:

> Our action, lived in life, or remembered in death, are the food and drink of the Spirits of the Thirteenth Cone, that which gives them separation and solidity.[39]

The Thirteenth Cone, in other words, has gyric relations with the cones of the Faculties and Principles, the two systems that control the spirits in life and between lives. It has a corresponding phase to each phase of the gyre. When we are in the twelfth month of our expanding gyre, we are in the first of the Thirteenth Cone, so that the contrary

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36. Fragment 66. Philip Wheelwright, Heraclitus, New York: Atheneum, 1964, p. 68.

37. Fragment 2. Ibid., p. 19.

38. Fragment 113. Ibid., pp. 90-91.

39. A Vision (1937), p. 230.

Cone serves us as the other half of the antinomy. Which simply means that the Thirteenth Cone as a whole is the "spiritual objective" of the souls in the gyre. Individual spirits of the Thirteenth Cone have their control over the souls in the relative world, and the individual souls of the relative cycles are, upon death, put through six purgatorial stages before they are reborn or delivered from the cycles of birth and death; during the round of incarnations the souls in the lesser gyres are controlled by the whirling of greater gyres:

> All the involuntary acts and facts of life are the effect of the whirring and interlocking of the gyres; but gyres may be interrupted or twisted by greater gyres, divide into two lesser gyres or multiply into four and so on. The uniformity of nature depends upon the constant return of gyres to the same point.[40]

The souls whirl round in the gyres until they are absorbed into the Thirteenth Cone, when the whirling of gyres comes to an end:

> When all sequence comes to an end, and the soul puts on the rhythmic or spiritual body or luminous body and contemplates all the events of its memory and every possible impulse in an eternal possession of itself in one single moment. That condition is alone animate, all the rest is phantasy....[41]

This combination of the individuality of souls and the macro-microcosmic periodicity of life is not Heraclitan nor Vedantic in origin. It is most likely derived from the Orphic doctrine of reincarnation. In the words of F. M. Cornford:

> Orphism is focussed on the individual soul, its heavenly origin and immutable nature, and its persistence, as an individual, throughout the round of incarnations. It is 'an exile from God

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40. Ibid., p. 237.

41. Mythologies, p. 357.

> and a wanderer'; and it is reunited with God, and with other souls, only after its final escape at the end of the Great Year. Hence, the Orphic is preoccupied with the salvation, by purifying rites, of his individual soul.[42]

The idea of the Thirteenth Cone, then, has non-Vedantic substrata which make Yeats's concept extremely complex and, in a sense, self-contradictory, for what are we to make of the Sphere which is "neither one nor many" and yet inhabited by the "teaching spirits"? What saves Yeats from a hopeless confusion is the concept of maya that he borrowed from the Upanishads. As Brahman manifests itself as the Creator and Destroyer to man through its magic power of illusion, so the Thirteenth Cone appears as a cone to man who, forced by the antinomies, cannot find it otherwise.

Yeats, however, could not accept the concept of maya wholly. He adapted the concept to his system only in the epistemological sense. He totally disregarded its metaphysical implication. By condemning the phenomenal world as illusory, the Vedantic philosophy denied it reality, which belongs solely to non-dual Brahman. It follows from this that the soul, in order to attain the ultimate reality, its freedom, must discard all vestiges of duality and unite itself with Brahman. As long as it inhabits the illusory world of duality, it is not free. In order to be free, the soul must know that the only reality is Brahman with which it is united; that knowledge constitutes the experience of freedom. The Vedantic philosophy is thus monistic-experiential in its perspective.

The experience of freedom is gained, according to the Upanishads, by a fusion of Brahman and Atman, the Self in the individual soul. The

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42. F. M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, a Study in the Origins of Western Speculation, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957, p. 179.

individual Self is truly the same as Brahman itself, although it is not aware of it as long as it is enthralled in the illusory world. In the conversation between Svetaketu and his father in Khandogya Upanished, the father explains to the son the meaning of the Brahman-Atman relationship:

> 1. 'As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce the juice into one form,
>
> 2. 'And as these juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have become merged in the True (either in deep sleep or in death), know not that they are merged in the True.
>
> 3. 'Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again.
>
> 4. 'Now that which is that subtile essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, are it.'[43]

The famous phrase, "Tat tvam asi" (Thou art it) defines the individual Self as one and the same as Brahman. The concept of the oneness of Brahman and Atman (Brahma-atma-aikyam) is expressed in another well-known phrase found in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Aham Brahma asmi" (I am Brahman).[44]

The liberation of the soul is achieved by knowing Brahman, by uniting the individual Self with the Supreme Self. Svetasvatara Upanishad has the following to say on the subject:

> 10. That which is perishable is the Pradhana (the first), the

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43. Khandogya Upanishad, VI, ix, 1-4. Muller, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 101.

44. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I, iv, 10. Muller, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 88.

immortal and imperishable is Hara. The one god rules the perishable (the pradhana) and the (living) self. From meditating on him, from joining him, from becoming one with him there is further cessation of all illusion in the end.

11. When that god is known, all fetters fall off, sufferings are destroyed, and birth and death cease. From meditating on him there arises, on the dissolution of the body, the third state, that of universal lordship; but he only who is alone, is satisfied.

12. This, which rests eternally within the self, should be known; and beyond this not anything has to be known. By knowing the enjoyer, the enjoyed, and the ruler everything has been declared to be three-fold, and this is Brahman.[45]

In another place the same Upanishad has this:

7. Those who know beyond this the High Brahman, the vast, hidden in the bodies of all creatures, and alone enveloping everything, as the Lord, they become immortal.[46]

It is clear, then, that the knowledge of Brahman means to the Vedanta the experience, which in turn means immortality. The idea is singularly monistic and experiential.

To dualistic-cognitive Yeats, this thoroughly monistic-experiential perspective was hardly congenial. Although he conceded to the Vedanta in the idea of the unintelligibility of the ultimate reality and even adapted, though half-heartedly, the Brahman-Atman relationship to his system, in which the Thirteenth Cone is "in every man and called by every man his freedom,"[47] Yeats found Heraclitus' idea of continuity of life more congenial to him. After all, to be steeped in a Brahmanic vision meant to lose sight of the world of conflict, which was as real

45. Svetasvatara Upanishad, I, 10-12. Ibid., pp. 235-36.

46. Ibid., p. 245.

47. A Vision, p. 302.

to him as the world of unity, for unity arose out of conflict. Thus Heraclitus' dictum, "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony"[48] was more easily accepted than the Vedantic concept, "Brahmaatma-aikyam."

Thus, A Vision gives us little or nothing on the subject of the soul's freedom; instead, it speaks about the transmigration of individual souls. The book mentions, however, the Hindu idea of the states of the soul in Book Three, in which four states of the soul that the Upanishads describe are briefly explained. Yeats fails, however, to relate those states of the soul to his concept of the Thirteenth Cone.

Elsewhere, however, Yeats vaguely tries to relate the Hindu concept of the soul's states to his system. In the series of essays and introductions which he produced as a result of his association with Shri Purohit Swami, Yeats discusses the question of the freedom of the soul. The essays are informative but offer very little of Yeats's own idea on the subject. From scattered passages and incomplete statements, however, we gather that Yeats connected the Hindu concept of sushupti (dreamless sleep) with his Phase One, the phase of the dark moon, and turiya (the fourth, transcendental state) with his Phase Fifteen, the phase of the full moon:

> I find my imagination setting in one line Turiya--full moon, mirror-like bright water, Mount Meru; and in the other Sushupti, moonless night, 'dazzling darkness'--Mount Ginār.[49]

Mount Meru stands for the perfect freedom that Bhagwan Shri Hamsa attained; Mount Ginār, on the other hand, stands for Sushupti which Shri

48. Fragment 98. Wheelwright, op. cit., p. 90.

49. Essays and Introductions, p. 472.

Purohit Swami attained.

Yeats, then, had presumably two ideas about the meaning of freedom, although he held one superior to the other. Freedom, on the one hand, means a state resulting from a free choice, where the effort and the aim are indistinguishable. On the other hand, it means that state of bliss where the self is completely absorbed into its anti-self. The former is a positive kind of freedom which is attained through positive choosing; the latter is a negative kind which is attained because there is no choice, no desire.

The positive freedom is attained at Phase Fifteen of Yeats's lunar cycle, where the antithetical man gains his fullest expression. There the Will completely absorbs the Creative Mind, and the Mask desired by the Will submerges the Body of Fate. This is the state of perfect beauty, so much so that it is not possible in human life:

> Its own body possesses the greatest possible beauty, being indeed that body which the soul will permanently inhabit, when all its phases have been repeated according to the number alloted: that which we call the clarified or Celestial Body.[50]

This is the state in which the dancer is indistinguisable from the dance, for "all thought has become image."[51] This state is related to turiya.

The negative freedom is attained at Phase One. There the Will is completely absorbed into the Creative Mind and the Mask into the Body of Fate. This is the state of complete objectivity, "complete passivity,

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50. A Vision (1937), p. 136.

51. Ibid.

complete plasticity."[52] Here the being is completely absorbed into its supernatural environment and the mind and the body have become "the instrument of supernatural manifestation."[53] The nearest that man can come to this phase is the Phase of the Fool, that is Phase 28. This is the dreamy state in which a person cares about nothing and lives according to the way his environment shapes him, with "no act but nameless drifting and turning."[54] A person in this state lives in perfect harmony with nature; birds and beasts are his friends. A passage from the poem, "Two Songs of a Fool"[55] is illuminating at this point.

> I slept on my three-legged stool by the fire,
> The speckled cat slept on my knee;
> We never thought to enquire
> Where the brown hare might be,
> And whether the door were shut.
> Who knows how she drank the wind
> Stretched up on two legs from the mat,
> Before she had settled her mind
> To drum with her heel and leap?
> Had I but awakened from sleep
> And called her name, she had heard,
> It may be, and had not stirred,
> That now, it may be, has found
> The horn's sweet note and the tooth of the hound.

There certainly is a note of peacefulness and calm acceptance of the grim realities of the world. The phase of perfect objectivity is a step further than this phase of the Fool. There a person will shake off the last link he has with the worldly self and melt into the Body of Fate. He attains his freedom by obliterating his identity:

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52. Ibid., p. 183.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Collected Poems, pp. 166-67.

> When man identifies himself with his Fate, when he is able to say, "Thy Will is our freedom" or when he is perfectly natural, that is to say, perfectly a portion of his surroundings, he is free even though all his actions can be foreseen, even though every action is a logical deduction from all that went before it. He is all Fate but has no Destiny.[56]

In relating Phase One to sushupti and Phase Fifteen to turiya Yeats sought support for his ideas in the moon image that the Upanishads use to explain the soul's reincarnation and its escape. The Upanishads explain that the soul that goes to the bright half of the moon is met by "a person not human"[57] and is led by him to "Brahman (the conditioned Brahman)"[58]; and the soul that goes to the dark half of the moon is, when it reaches the moon, "loved (eaten) by the Devas."[59] Yeats noticed a tremendous possibility that the image offered in supporting his own system. He saw a gyric relationship in the bright and the dark sides of the moon:

> A European would...call the increasing moon man's personality, as it fills into the round and becomes perfect, overthrowing the black night of oblivion. Am I not justified in discovering there the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity, between Self and Not-Self, between waking life and dreamless sleep?[60]

The Heraclitian mode of thinking which inspired him to conceive the interlocking gyres is basic here. Thus, Phase One, the phase of the dark moon, is related to sushupti; and Phase Fifteen, the phase of the

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56. A Vision (1937), p. 112.

57. Khandogya Upanishad, V, x, 1. Muller, The Upanishads, Vol. I, p. 80.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Essays and Introductions, p. 470.

full moon, is related to turiya, the final escape:

> The bright fortnight's escape is Turiya, and in the dark fortnight, the ascetic who, unlike the common people, asks nothing of God or Ghost, may, though unworthy of Thriya, find Sushupti and absorption in God, as if the Soul were His food or fuel.[61]

Turiya, then, meant for Yeats a freedom gained in the subjective phase and sushupti was that gained in the objective phase.

What distinguishes Yeats's ideas of freedom from the Vedantic concept is perhaps their extrovert nature. For Yeats freedom is necessarily associated with the soul's environment. While Phase One means a complete absorption of the soul into its environment, Phase Fifteen means a complete absorption of the environment by the soul. This is how Yeats interprets the Hiudu concept of turiya and sushupti. Whether it occurs in Phase One or Phase Fifteen, freedom means a vision of unity, a unity arising out of antinomy. This vision of unity is basically different from the Vedantic knowledge of Brahman, which emphasizes introspection.[62] According to the Upanishads the soul is not expected to go outside it. It is expected to divest itself of all temporal attributes and intensely meditate upon itself, for there is no ultimate reality outside it: "Sa va ayam atma Brahma" ("That Self is indeed Brahman").[63]

According to the Upanishads, Atman (the Self) is the witness of the experiences of three states: the states of waking, dreaming, and dreamless

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61. Essays and Introductions, pp. 470f.

62. Rudolph Otto disintinguishes two ways of mystical knowledge: "the mysticism of introspection" and "the mysticism of unifying vision." The former is characterized by a "withdrawal from all outward things into the ground of one's own soul," while the latter "knows nothing of 'inwardness'" but is characterized by "the emphasis on unity, and the struggle against all diversity." See Mysticism East and West, a Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism, tr. by Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne, New York: Meridian Books, 1957, pp. 29-69.

63. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV, iv, 5. Muller, The Upanishads, Vol. II, p. 176.

sleep. The third, dreamless state is called sushupti and is the closest that the soul can come to the knowledge of Brahman in the relative world. Atman completely detatched from the three states is one and the same as the transcendental Brahman; and the knowledge of Brahman is the experience of freedom, which is called turiya. The method of attaining that experience described in the Upanishads is characteristically monistic and experiential in that it negates all relative attributes of the Self, which it calls unreal, and brings one to pure and undifferentiated consciousness. Katha Upanishad explains how Brahman is attained as follows.[64]

> 10. When the five instruments of knowledge stand still together with the mind, and when the intellect does not move, that is called the highest state.
>
> 11. This, the firm holding back of the senses, is what is called Yoga. He must be free from thoughtlessness then, for Yoga comes and goes.
>
> 12. He (the Self) cannot be reached by speech, by mind, or by the eye. How can it be apprehended except by him who says: "He is?"
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> 13. By the words "He is," is he to be apprehended, and by (admitting) the reality of both (the invisible Brahman and the visible world, as coming from Brahman). When he has been apprehended by the words "He is," then his reality becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman.
>
> 14. When all desires that dwell in his heart cease, then the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman.
>
> 15. When all the ties of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal--here ends the teaching.

Mundaka Upanishad has the following:[65]

> 7. That (true Brahman) shines forth grand, divine, inconceiv-

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64. Katha Upanishad, II, vi, 10-15. Ibid., pp. 22f.

65. Mundaka Upanishad, III, i, 7-8. Ibid., p. 39.

able, smaller than small; it is for beyond what is far and yet near here, it is hidden in the cave (of the heart) among those who see it even here.

8. He is not apprehended by the eye, nor by speech, nor by the other senses, not by penance or good works. When a man's nature has become purified by the serence light of knowledge, then he sees him, meditating on him as without parts.

The experience of Brahman, then, is essentially introspective. This aspect of Vedanta that denies the world of names and forms was hardly congenial to Yeats. He could not let the world of conflict go, even though his ultimate aim was the world of unity. His unity was to arise out of conflict.

The method of non-dualistic Vedanta, however, sets the goal of the ultimate experience too high for ordinary people to attain. In order to attain oneness with Brahman, one must rigorously discard every vestige of duality and bring his soul to its mirror-like clarity. This is more easily said than done. It must be difficult especially for those to whom the world of senses appears so real that the cognitive perspective seems to be a valid way to true knowledge. It was, at any rate, difficult for Yeats, to whom knowledge meant something "flowing, concrete, phenomenal." It was natural, therefore, that he should have felt sympathetic toward the Tantric philosophy.[66]

Unlike Vedanta, Tantra emphasizes the importance of the world of names and forms. Non-dualistic Vedanta insists that Brahman is attained only by divesting the soul of its phenomenal attributes. Tantra, on the

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66. Guha believes that Yeats found the sources of his interlocking gyres and sexual mysticism of his later years in Tantra. As to the source of the interlocking gyres, however, Yeats is silent about Tantra in A Vision while he mentions several other possible sources of inspiration. As to sexual mysticism, he may have derived it from the Cabala among others.

other hand, looks upon the world of duality as a manifestations of the ultimate reality which can be transformed back into its original form. Maya, according to Tantra, creates the world of names and forms in which various elements are polarized. This process of polarization is called the "outgoing current" and it reveals reality in the state of evolution; a reversal of this current, called the "return current," reveals reality in its original state of infinitude. Based on this concept, the Tantric way of realization is to transform the outgoing current into the return current. Hence, it emphasizes the sublimation of conflict into liberation. The ultimate reality is not to be realized by negating phenomenal attributes of the soul, but by positively affirming them, bringing together the poles of antinomy. The physical union of man and woman is thus one way to sublimate the polarity into the cosmic principle of Siva-Sakti. We find here Yeats's familiar idea of unity arising out of conflict.

In Section VII of his essay "The Mandukya Upanishad" (1935), Yeats comments on the Tantric way of realization:

> An Indian devotee may recognise that he approaches the Self through a transfiguration of sexual desire; he repeats thousands of times a day words of adoration, calls before his eyes a thousand times the divine image. He is not always solitary, there is another method, that of the Tantric philosophy, where a man and woman, when in sexual union, transfigure each other's image into the masculine and feminine characters of God....[67]

Whether the idea of the consummated physical love as a resolution of conflict was derived directly from the Tantric philosophy or not, the idea expressed in this passage is the theme of much of Yeats's later poetry. Yeats could not, however, wholeheartedly accept the Tantric

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67. *Essays and Introductions*, p. 484

concept of sexual union as the way of realization. Constantly haunted with a sense of failure, Yeats maintained a skeptical attitude to any claim of attainment of perfect knowledge. In "Solomon and the Witch," as it has been previously pointed out, there is no true consummation of love: when the sexual act is over, both Solomon and Sheba are thrown back into the cyclical process of life. In "Three Bushes," the lady, the chambermaid and the lover are not united until after death. Cuchulain of The Only Jealousy of Emer renounces his only chance of being united with the supernatural Fand, and is brought back to the natural world, where he returns not to his wife, who retrieved him from Fand, but to his mistress, who herself realizes that her lover's heart is subject to change.

To the Tantric philosophy, therefore, Yeats held an ambivalent attitude, just as he maintained the same attitude to Vedanta. On the one hand, he accepted the affirmative attitude of Tantra to the world of duality; on the other hand, he was skeptical over Tantra's claim that the perfect knowledge of reality can be attained by reversing the outgoing current of maya. To Yeats, any symbolic forms or action were capable and incapable of revealing the ultimate reality. The sexual union was no exception:

> The present Pope has said in his last Encyclical that the natural union of man and woman has a kind of sacredness. He thought doubtless of the marriage of Christ and the Church, whereas I see in it a symbol of that eternal instant where the antinomy is resolved. It is not the resolution itself.[68]

Yeat's schooling in Indian philosophy is thus characterized by an

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68. A Vision, p. 214.

absence of experience, of Brahmanic vision. In turning to the Upanishads he fell into the very Vedantic abstraction which he disliked so much; with Tantra he could not go all the way in the belief in sublimating antinomy into pure consciousness. The monistic-experiential wisdom of Hindu philosophers was an elixir he coveted, but the dosage they offered proved to be too strong for him to swallow at once. Thus he wrote to Sturge Moore in 1929:

> My dreams and much psychic phenomena force me into a certain little-trodden way but I must not go too far from the main European track, which means in practice that I turn away from all attempts to make philosophy support science by starting with some form of 'fact' or 'datum': that way lie those deep-sea fish Taylor objects to in the extract and all the obscurantism of the Ratcatchers.[69]

69. Ursula Bridge, ed., W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore, Their Correspondence 1901-1937, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953, p. 149.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Flower or the Gyre

I

Yeats was introduced to the Noh drama of Japan by Ezra Pound, who served him as a secretary during the winters of 1913-14, 1914-15, and 1915-16. Pound, while acting as Yeats's secretary, had a project of his own, which was to edit and publish Ernest Fenollosa's work on the Noh. The discovery of the Noh meant for Yeats a confirmation of the aesthetic principles he was groping for since the publication of the book, Ideas of Good and Evil.[1] In the Noh he thought he found an ideal form of drama, an entirely new form for the West--the kind of drama that does not represent the clash of characters, but a certain mood for its theme. His infatuation with the Noh, however, did not wholly result from his reaction against the realistic school of Ibsen, as has been generally believed, nor from his disbelief in the systematic tragedy of the Aristotelian or the Elizabethan type. It is true that Yeats reacted against Ibsenite realism or the Aristotelian clash of characters on the stage, but such an unfavorable reaction stemmed from his basic dualistic doctrine of aesthetics, from which his theory and practice of the Noh aesthetic precisely sprang. The Noh theory of

1. I accept the recent theory, put forward by Engelberg, Vendler and others, that the discovery of the Noh meant for Yeats a confirmation rather than a complete "about face" in his aesthetic belief; but it is important not to see the Noh through Yeats's eyes in appraising Yeats's principle in connection with the Noh: the discrepancies that exist between the Noh and Yeats throw more light on the subject than the similarities.

Yeats is a culmination of the years of his effort to formulate an adequate aesthetic doctrine that parallels his antinomical view of the universe. His essay, "Certain Noble Plays of Japan," which he wrote for Pound's 1916 edition of Fenollosa's work on the Noh and which he included as the opening article in the 1919 edition of The Cutting of an Agate, embodies the theories that he had been working out when he discovered the Noh. The essay, therefore, which throws considerable light on the meaning of the earlier essays, is understood better by tracing the development of Yeats's theories in the earlier essays.

Pound completed his project and the book was published in 1916 with Yeats's introduction. In it Yeats exultingly wrote:

> ...I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect, and symbolic, and having no need of mob or Press to pay its way--an aristocratic form.[2]

This "aristocratic form" of drama which Yeats declares to have invented has two basic elements, intimacy and distance. These seemingly contradicting terms represent in truth the two sides of the same coin. By intimacy is meant ridding the stage of all superfluous ornaments and bringing the stage close to the audience so that the natural speech of the common people may be clearly heard in its simplest way. It has much to do with stagecraft. Distance means to keep all superficial, realistic representations from the stage and bring the audience into "a deep of the mind." Drama must deal with the essence of things, not ever-changing phenomena. We already see Yeats's dualistic theory in this intimacy-distance principle. The dualism, however, is not

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2. Essays and Introductions, p. 221.

irreconcilable but rather complementary. Intimacy is achieved only when distance is doggedly kept from the pushing world of realism, while distance is possible only when the actors and the audience commingle in close intimacy and pass together into "a deep of the mind." Neither is possible without the other. The intimacy-distance principle represents the aesthetic counterpart of Yeats's dualistic perspective of cognition and experience. The idea of intimacy, with its consciousness of stagecraft and dramatic form, constitutes the cognitive perspective; while the idea of distance, with its emphasis on psychological effect on the audience, constitutes the experiential perspective. Each idea, however, carries within itself a polarity of cognitive-experiential perspectives, as I shall presently show.

In the first four sections of his essay, "Certain Noble Plays of Japan," Yeats elaborates on these two basic elements of good art. Intimacy, Yeats explains, comes from a simplification of the stage. The theater since the Renaissance has grown less and less expressive because it has tended to be elaborate; and that elaboration destroys intimacy.

> The stage-opening, the powerful light and shade, the number of feet between myself and the players have destroyed intimacy. I have found myself thinking of players who needed perhaps but to unroll a mat in some Eastern garden.[3]

The kind of drama that can create intimacy is of a drawing-room type that needs no more than a few players and a few people of good taste for an audience. It is an "aristocratic form," being free from the

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3. Ibid., pp. 222f.

mob and the press.

What effects would this type of drama bring about on the audience through an intimacy it creates? There are two. To begin with, because it has rid itself of the physical distance and the loud orchestra, it can now make the natural speech of the common people live. On a big stage in a large theater the player must shout in order to be heard; besides, he has a loud orchestra to compete with. He must cease to speak like a camel-driver or a sailor, because his voice "can only become louder by becoming less articulate, by discovering some new musical sort of roar or scream."[4] By ridding itself of this difficulty the new drama can restore dignity to natural speech and song.

> It should be again possible for a few poets to write as all did once, not for the printed page but to be sung.[5]

Yeats was a firm believer in the importance of the life and speech of the common people. In this respect he is far from being aristocratic in the ordinary sense of the term. In his letter to Dorothy Wellesley, dated December 19, 1935, he wrote:

> You have the best language among us because you most completely follow Aristotle's advice and write 'like the common people.' You have the animation of spoken words and spoken syntax.[6]

The essence of a culture is found in the folk tales and songs handed down the generations by the people. In order to grasp the essence one must go directly to common people. That was why he and George

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4. Ibid., p. 223.

5. Ibid.

6. Letters, p. 846.

Pollexfen studied the songs and tales of the Irish country folk; and for the same reason he advised Singe, when he met him in Paris, to go to the Aran Islands and live among the islanders. The aristocratic form of drama is thus deeply rooted in the life of the common people. This explains the meaning of the remark that Yeats is reported to have made to a Japanese poet, Yonejiro Noguchi, in an interview. Yeats, commenting on the project Pound was carrying on at the time, said to Noguchi:

> In my opinion, the racial element alone is the most valuable in any kind of poetry; and true literature must be the literature of the folk strengthened, not weakened, by discipline. For this reason I was delighted to read the Japanese Noh plays which the late Mr. Fenollosa translated and my friend Pound is editing. I was impressed with the Noh.[7] (Translation mine.)

The remark is illuminating, for it not only reveals Yeats's motive for adapting the medieval dramatic genre of Japan to his work, but also explains one of the aesthetic principles he had worked out at the time of his meeting with the Noh. True, the aristocratic form of drama is intended for a small audience of good taste, but that form will not impress the audience or Yeats unless the spirit of the race or culture is animated in it.

Thus the aristocratic drama brings home to the audience the spirit that runs in the life of the common people without the artificiality of oration and stage manners of a big theater. In the essay on the Noh Yeats writes:

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7. Yonejiro Noguchi, Airurando Jōchō, 1925. Quoted by Hisashi Furukawa in Obeijin no Noh-gaku Kenkyu (The studies of the Noh by Western hands), Tokyo: Tokyo Women's College, 1963, p. 15.

> I love all the arts that can still remind me of their origin among the common people, and my ears are only comfortable when the singer sings as if mere speech had taken fire, when he appears to have passed into song almost imperceptibly.[8]

What Yeats is upholding here is naturalness, the kind of naturalness that animates the ordinary life of the common people. He is against all artificiality in the theater that creates on the stage an illusion, realistic or otherwise.

The drawing-room type of drama has another effect tied in with the naturalness of speech. Because it has rid itself of all artificiality that stands between the players and the audience, thereby creating naturalness in acting, it has now made it possible for the audience to take part in the aesthetic experience with the players. In the essay on the Noh Yeats tells of a group of Spanish professional dancers whom he saw dance in a drawing-room.

> Doubtless their training had been long, laborious, and wearisome; but now one could not be deceived, their movement was full of joy. They were among friends, and it all seemed but the play of children; how powerful it seemed, how passionate, while an even more miraculous art, separated from us by the footlights, appeared in the comparison laborious and professional. It is well to be close enough to an artist to feel for him a personal liking, close enough perhaps to feel that our liking is returned.[9]

In such an intimate atmosphere the player seems to "recede" into "the deeps of the mind," and the spectator's imagination is stirred. In such an atmosphere alone is it possible for the audience to share the moment of the subjective experience of beauty with the players. Yeats reached this realization when he saw a Japanese dancer, Michio Ito, dance in a drawing-room. In a most intimate atmosphere with no artifi-

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8. Essays and Introductions, p. 223.

9. Ibid., pp. 223f.

cial lights that glare in the eyes, the Japanese dancer seemed to Yeats to dwell in the world of beauty and pure imagination.

> In the studio and in the drawing-room alone, where the lighting was the light we are most accustomed to, did I see him as the tragic image that has stirred my imagination. There, where no studied lighting, no stage-picture made an artificial world, he was able, as he rose from the floor, where he had been sitting cross-legged, or as he threw out an arm, to recede from us into some more powerful life. Because that separation was achieved by human means alone, he receded but to inhabit as it were the deeps of the mind. One realised anew, at every separating strangeness, that the measure of all arts' greatness can be but in their intimacy.[10]

Such, then, is what Yeats means by "intimacy." What is of special interest to us is the dualistic nature of the principle. The type of drama that aims at intimacy is necessarily aristocratic, for it is intended only for a small audience of initiates. But the speech and the atmosphere it needs have their origin in the life of the common people. What it assumes is physical ease and naturalness, while what it achieves is spiritual intensity. The former is conceived in Yeats's cognitive perspective, while the latter is clearly rooted in his experiential perspective.

The second principle that sustains good art is distance. "All imaginative art remains," says Yeats in his essay on the Noh, "at a distance and this distance, once chosen, must be firmly held against a pushing world. Verse, ritual, music, and dance in association with action require that gesture, costume, facial expression, stage arrangement must help in keeping the door."[11] For a moment one might think

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10. Ibid., p. 224.

11. Ibid.

that this concept of distance is in direct contradiction with the previous concept of intimacy. True, in one respect it removes from a play that which is emphasized in the concept of intimacy; that is, it denies to a play an interest in familiarity. However, it must be noted that this seeming contradiction is not a contradiction of logic, but of perspective. While the principle of intimacy, by concentrating on such formalistic aspects of drama as stage, audience, speech, constitutes Yeats's cognitive perspective, the principle of distance constitutes his experiential perspective by having in view mainly the experiential side of drama. A play must be performed in a very intimate atmosphere with the audience and must take its stuff from the familiar life of the common people, but its effect is of a highly sophisticated sort--an aristocratic form. Now the latter point--the aesthetic effect of a play--is what is emphasized in the principle of distance.

In contrast to the "imaginative art" that remains at a distance away from the pushing world, the "unimaginative arts" present the world as it appears to our senses as such and for its own sake. Yeats was against this sort of art because it denies one a reverie in the subjective world.

> Our unimaginative arts are content to set a piece of the world as we know it in a place by itself, to put their photographs as it were in a plush or a plain frame, but the art which interests me, while seeming to separate from the world and us a group of figures, images, symbols, enables us to pass for a few moments into a deep of the mind that had hitherto been too subtle for our habitation.[12]

As will be shown later Yeats was against the realistic drama of Ibsen

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12. Ibid., pp. 224f.

because it was too preoccupied with the surface detail of life. The Ibsenite drama, priding itself in giving the audience a real picture of life, une tranche de vie, failed to fathom the deeps of the mind. It gave a picture to the eyes, but not an intensity of experience to the mind. His kind of drama, Yeats believed, would enable one to forget himself for a few moments and dwell in the subjective world of passionate reverie.

There are two ways whereby distance is maintained in drama. One is to exclude all artificiality from stagecraft, and the other is to appeal, not to the physical reality of life, but to the tradition, the tribal memory of beauty.

In order to achieve distance in drama, everything that is not human must be removed, for lyrical intensity is attained only through human elements.

> As a deep of the mind can only be approached through what is most human, most delicate, we should distrust bodily distance, mechanism, and loud noise.[13]

Yeats's use of masks also originated in his distrust of surface detail. Realistic facial expressions only obstruct lyrical intensity. In fact, Yeats's distrust of physical vitality was so great that he seemed to put more faith in the state of being dead:

> It is even possible that being is only possessed completely by the dead, and that it is some knowledge of this that makes us gaze with so much emotion upon the face of the Sphinx or of Buddha.[14]

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13. Ibid., p. 225.

14. Ibid., p. 226.

Here again we see Yeats's dualistic perspective. A deep feeling of life can be best expressed by a state resembling death.

Realism is only for the less refined minds, not for the subtle. Even the humorous realism of the Elizabethan tragedy, which heightens the tragic effect, was originally intended for the common citizens in the pit. Even today, realism "is the delight...of all those whose minds, educated by schoolmasters and newspapers, are without the memory of beauty and emotional subtlety."[15]

What appeals, then, to the subtler minds? Yeats's answer is tradition. All great art appeals to the collective memory of beauty.

> A poetical passage cannot be understood without a rich memory, and like the older school of painting appeals to a tradition, and that not merely when it speaks of 'Lethe wharf' or 'Dido on the wild sea banks' but in rhythm, in vocabulary....[16]

The position Yeats takes here is essentially the position he took in 1901, when he wrote in his essay, "Magic," that

> what we call romance, poetry, intellectual beauty, is the only signal that the supreme Enchanter, or some one in His councils, is speaking of what has been, and shall be again, in the consummation of time.[17]

The principle of distance means, then, an appeal to the tradition, the tribal memory of beauty, from which a lyrical intensity in art is gained. Such an appeal, Yeats believed, is an Asiatic habit. The West, ever preoccupied with the idea of progress and a belief in physical

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15. Ibid., p. 227.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 52.

reality, has all but lost the habit; it has barely kept it in lyrical poetry. This is the reason why Yeats went to the Noh drama of Japan for a model in dramatic form.

> Europe is very old and has seen many arts run through the circle and has learned the fruit of every flower and known what this fruit sends up, and it is now time to copy the East and live deliberately.[18]

II

The dualistic principle of intimacy and distance that Yeats discusses in the four sections of his essay, "Certain Noble Plays of Japan," was not a new discovery for Yeats. It was something he had been developing for quite some time before he was introduced to the Noh. The dualistic principle already exists, as a matter of fact, in the essays contained in Ideas of Good and Evil (1896-1903), although in those essays the principle of distance is emphasized.

It is convenient to divide the development of Yeats's aesthetic theory before meeting with the Noh into two periods: the one centering around the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil and the other immediately following it--roughly after 1903. In the earlier period Yeats's experiential perspective is predominant while in the latter period it is definitely on the wane though never abandoned. On the other hand, the cognitive perspective is considerably played down in the earlier period, while in the latter period it assumes the predominant role in Yeats's mind. It must be pointed out, however, that the experiential perspective is never lost sight of throughout the periods; indeed, it

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18. Ibid., p. 228.

constantly points to the ideal state of art.

I discussed the dualistic nature of Yeats's symbolic theory in Chapter Two. I pointed out that Yeats's symbolism was the means to attain a vision of reality, and that Yeats felt a cleavage between his symbols and reality. Yeats's frustration stems from the dualistic nature of his symbolic theory. Poetry does not have its own world; it has only the evocative function. In his two essays, "The Symbolism of Painting" and "The Symbolism of Poetry," he develops his theory of symbolism:

> All art that is not mere story-telling, or mere portraiture, is symbolic, and has the purpose of those symbolic talismans which mediaeval magicians made with complex colours and forms, and bade their patients ponder over daily, and guard with holy secrecy; for it entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence.[19]

So, art is, in one sense, a means of communication with the eternal world that lies beyond the senses, and the symbols in a work of art do work wonders when they are disengaged from the restrictions imposed on them by the principle that makes that work of art.

> ...if you liberate a person or a landscape from the bonds of motives and their actions, causes and their effects, and from all bonds but the bonds of your love, it will change under your eyes, and become a symbol of an infinite emotion, a perfected emotion, a part of the Divine Essence; for we love nothing but the perfect, and our dreams make all things perfect, that we may love them.[20]

A symbol must cut all its earthly links except the meditative faculty

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19. Ibid., p. 148.

20. Ibid., p. 149.

of man in order to evoke the Divine Essence, and man must be in a deep meditation in order to see the Divine Essence revealed in a symbol:

> ...one is furthest from symbols when one is busy doing this or that, but the soul moves among symbols and unfolds in symbols when trance, or madness, or deep meditation has withdrawn it from every impulse but its own.[21]

There is thus a strong mystical coloring in Yeats's concept of symbolism. The purpose of art is essentially the same as that which religious and visionary people seek; and symbolism alone approximates the state desired in mysticism:

> Religious and visionary people, monks and nuns, and medicine-men and opium-eaters, see symbols in their trances; for religious and visionary thought is thought about perfection and the way to perfection; and symbols are the only things free enough from all bonds to speak of perfection.[22]

The way of the artist, however, is different from that of the mystic, for the artist works from imperfection to perfection. The artist's imagination is necessarily smaller than the mystic's.

> The systematic mystic is not the greatest of artists, because his imagination is too great to be bounded by a picture or a song, and because only imperfection in a mirror of perfection, or perfection in a mirror of imperfection, delights our frailty.[23]

The artist is concerned necessarily with the earthly things, the shadows of reality. It is the artist's task to arrange colors and forms so that they evoke reality. The physical world reflects the

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21. Ibid., p. 162.

22. Ibid., p. 149.

23. Ibid., p. 150.

spiritual world, but it is the artist that animates the physical world: it is the artist, in effect, that turns a skeleton of a bird into a living bird. So great and so important is the task of the artist. Yeats writes in the essay, "The Symbolism of Poetry":

> I doubt indeed if the crude circumstance of the world, which seems to create all our emotions, does more than reflect, as in multiplying mirrors, the emotions that have come to solitary men in moments of poetical contemplation; or that love itself would be more than an animal hunger but for the poet and his shadow the priest, for unless we believe that outer things are the reality, we must believe that the gross is the shadow of the subtle, that things are wise before they become foolish, and secret before they cry out in the market-place.[24]

And in the essay, "The Moods" (1895), he writes about the artist's guiding principle:

> We hear much of his need for the restraints of reason, but the only restraint he can obey is the mysterious instinct that has made him an artist, and that teaches him to discover immortal moods in mortal desires, an undecaying hope in our trivial ambitions, a divine love in sexual passion.[25]

Thus, the artist is a sort of medium trying to communicate with spirits through earthly means. In order to succeed he must perfect his skill—an idea which becomes increasingly vital in Yeats's thinking after the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil, as will be seen later. The artist's skill must be as subtle as the Divine Essence which he seeks to grasp, for

> although you can expound an opinion, or describe a thing, when your words are not quite well chosen, you cannot give a body to

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24. Ibid., p. 158.

25. Ibid., p. 195.

> something that moves beyond the senses, unless your words are as subtle, as complex, as full of mysterious life, as the body of a flower or of a woman.[26]

The artist, then, takes the stuff of his art from the earthly things and turns it into an artistic whole and perfects it to the point where it touches the Divine Essence. To put it in other words, the artist must see that the Divine Essence is successfully brought down to the world of the senses: he must "give a body to something that moves beyond the senses."

It must be noted, however, that the stuff of poetry has no value of itself for Yeats. It has only a functional value; it is important in so far as it evokes eternity. Yeats is strongly against the kind of art that delights in descriptions of external things. Writing in 1899 to the editor of the Daily Chronicle, Yeats argued:

> The literature and painting of our time, when they come out of a deep life, are laboring to awaken again our interests in the moral and spiritual realities which were once the foundation of the arts; and the theatre, if it would cease to be but the amusement of idleness, must cast off that interest in external and accidental things which has marred all modern arts, and dramatic art more than any.[27]

Yeats's reaction against the realistic drama of Ibsen stems from his disbelief in nature per se. In his essay, "The Tragic Generation," he recalls his unfavorable reaction to Ibsen's A Doll's House, the first Ibsen play to be performed in England:

> I resented being invited to admire dialogue so close to modern educated speech that music and style were impossible.

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26. Ibid., p. pp. 163f.

27. The Daily Chronicle, Jan. 27, 1899. Letters, p. 310.

> 'Art is art because it is not nature,' I kept repeating to myself....[28]

Yeats quite frequently expresses his peculiar distrust of modern educated speech. It sharply contrasts with his belief in the common speech of the common people. The reason, of course, is that he believed that ordinary people, particularly the uneducated, were the carriers of archetypal ideas, which they handed from generation to generation in folk songs and tales. The realistic drama was undesirable because it neglected the folk tradition, taking more interest in modern city life. Furthermore, the realistic drama described the details of modern life for their own sake.

The type of drama that Yeats endorsed was a subjective type, which represented man's inner feeling, not externality nor character. He wrote to Fiona Macleod in 1897:

> My own theory of poetical or legendary drama is that it should have no realistic, or elaborate, but only a symbolic and decorative setting. ...The acting should have an equivalent distance to that of the play from common realities. The play might be almost, in some cases, modern mystery plays.[29]

The modern mystery play was what Yeats wanted in the theater. In one sense Yeats is a reactionary. He would even carry his drama further back--perhaps to the original myth from which Neitzsche said tragedy derives its birth. His essay, "The Autumn of the Body" (1898), indeed, makes a parallelism in theory to Nietzsche's "The Birth of Tragedy"--a parallelism which Yeats confirmed later when he retracted the

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28. Autobiographies, p. 279.

29. Letters, p. 280.

position. In that essay he says that the literature of Europe is struggling against the "externality" which the scientific age has brought into literature. European literature once looked upon the world as "a dictionary of types and symbols," but it has increasingly assumed a critical and interpretive position towards life. It has become weary of its form-consciousness and has begun to seek, in the Nietzschean term, a Dionysian ecstasy.

> I see, indeed, in the arts of every country those faint lights and faint colours and faint outlines and faint energies which many call 'the decadence' and which I, because I believe that the arts lie dreaming of things to come, prefer to call the autumn of the body. An Irish poet whose rhythms are like the cry of a sea-bird in autumn twilight has told its meaning in the line, 'The very sunlight's weary, and it's time to quit the plough.'[30]

Time is about to come for the literature of Europe to enter upon a new era, a Dionysian era, which is characterized by a Dionysian urge to transcend the Apollonian form, a return to the essences of things, a reversal of the process in which the literature of Europe became Apollonian.

> We are, it may be, at a crowning crisis of the world, at the moment when man is about to ascend, with the wealth he has been so long gathering upon his shoulders, the stairway he has been descending from the first days.[31]

And the artist will take the lead in the ascending movement:

> The arts are, I believe, about to take upon their shoulders the burdens that have fallen from the shoulders of priests, and to

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30. Essays and Introductions, p. 191.

31. Ibid., p. 192.

> lead us back upon our journey by filling our thoughts with the essences of things, and not with things. We are about to substitute once more the distillation of alchemy for the analyses of chemistry and for some other sciences; and certain of us are looking everywhere for the perfect alembic that no silver or golden drop may escape.[32]

Yeats was first introduced to Nietzsche by John Quinn and was absorbed in reading his work for a while. In a letter written probably in September 1902 he tells Lady Gregory how excited he is about Nietzsche.

> Dear friend, I have written to you little badly of late I am afraid, for the truth is you have a rival in Nietzsche, that strong enchanter. I have read him so much that I have made my eyes bad again. ... Nietzsche completes Blake and has the same roots--I have not read anything with so much excitement since I got to love Morris's stories which have the same curious astringent joy.[33]

Nietzsche saw two opposing art impulses in nature, represented respectively by Dionysus and Apollo, from which music and tragedy developed in the culture of the Aryan race. Dionysus represents an ecstatic art impulse whereby the individual is drowned in an experience of oneness with "the mysterious Primordial Unity."[34] On the other hand, Apollo represents a plastic art impulse which points to individuation and "the pictorial world of dreams."[35] Music and tragedy, Nietzsche believed, originated in the Dionysian impulse, which was later reconciled by its contrary impulse, the Apollonian:

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32. Ibid., p. 193.

33. Letters, p. 379.

34. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," The Philosophy of Nietzsche, Clifton P. Fadiman, trans, New York: The Modern Library, 1954, p. 956.

35. Ibid., p. 957.

> Music and tragic myth are equally the expression of the Dionysian capacity of a people, and are inseparable from each other. Both originate in a sphere of art lying beneath and beyond the Apollonian;.... Here the Dionysian, as compared with the Apollonian, exhibits itself as the eternal and original artistic force, which in general calls into existence the entire world of phenomena; in the midst of which a new transfiguring appearance becomes necessary, in order to keep alive the animated world of individuation.[36]

In Yeats's essay, "Autumn of the Body," the two art impulses are dealt with. Although they are not given the Nietzschean terms and though Yeats suggests in his letter to John Quinn that he arrived at these concepts independent of Nietzsche, a parallelism between the essay and Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy" is striking. What interests us most, however, is not the parallelism itself. It is rather the fact that the order of the impulses in Nietzsche's essay is reversed in Yeats's. Nietzsche regarded the development of tragic drama as a reconciliation between the Dionysian impulse and the Apollonian, or the Apollonian imposition of the dream world on the Dionysian drunken ecstasy. Yeats, on the other hand, saw an art-impulse pervading Europe that tried to transcend the forms, and firmly believed that art would carry man back to the primordial myth. At the time he wrote "The Autumn of the Body," then, he laid more emphasis on the Dionysian art-impulse, that is, the experiential perspective, than on the Apollonian, that is, the cognitive perspective.

It is interesting, however, that Yeats reverses the emphasis shortly after his excitement over Nietzsche's theory. When Ideas of Good and Evil was published in 1903, Yeats's enthusiasm for Dionysus

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36. Ibid., p. 1087.

had waned. He wrote to John Quinn in May 1903 and told him of the change of heart:

> Tomorrow I shall send you my new book, Ideas of Good and Evil. I feel that much of it is out of my present mood; that it is true, but no longer true for me. ... The book is too lyrical, too full of aspirations after remote things, too full of desires. Whatever I do from this out will, I think, be more creative. I will express myself, so far as I express myself in criticism at all, by that sort of craft. I have always felt that the soul has two movements primarily: one to transcend forms, and the other to create forms. Nietzsche, to whom you have been the first to introduce me, calls these the Dionisiac and the Apollonic, respectively. I think I have to some extent got weary of that wild God Dionysus, and I am hoping that the Far-Darter will come in his place.[37]

And he wrote in the same vein to George Russel (AE) around the same time:

> I am no longer in much sympathy with an essay like 'Autumn of the Body,' not that I think that essay untrue. But I think I mistook for a permanent phase of the world what was only preparation. The close of the last century was full of strange desire to get out of form, to get some kind of disembodied beauty, and now it seems to me the contrary impulse has come. I feel about me and in me an impulse to create form, to carry the realization of beauty as far as possible.[38]

It is difficult to say whether or not Yeats's change of attitude was influenced by Nietzsche. Our main concern here is that Yeats's aesthetic principle has a close affinity to the theory which Nietzsche develops in "The Birth of Tragedy." And what is important is that Yeats's sympathy lies with the Apollonian perspective after the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the cognitive

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37. Letters, p. 403.

38. Ibid., p. 402.

perspective of Apollo has won Yeats from the hands of Dionysus. As I stated earlier, the two perspectives have a gyric relation to each other. A predominance of one does not mean a defeat of the other. They are in reconciliatory conflict like Empedocles's concord and discord, or Heraclitus's mortals and immortals, "dying each other's life, living each other's death," as Yeats says in A Vision.

Even after the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil Yeats's basic concept of art remains changeless. He still believes that art is essentially affective. In the essay, "J. M. Singe and the Ireland of his Time" (1911), he praises Singe for finding his art "where those monks found God, in the depths of the mind."[39] And he goes on to say:

> Only that which does not teach, which does not cry out, which does not persuade, which does not condescend, which does not explain, is irresistible. It is made by men who expressed themselves to the full, and it works through the best minds....[40]

Any art that is declamatory and explanatory does not stir imagination. All good art, for Yeats, asks for emotional participation; it does not ask for understanding, for, Yeats believed, "literature is a child of experience, of knowledge never."[41] "We should not," wrote Yeats in 1919 in a letter to Brinsley Macnamara, "as a rule have to say things for their own sake in a play but for the sake of emotion."[42] Art, therefore, is ultimately Dionysian rather than Apollonian:

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39. Essays and Introductions, p. 341.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., p. 317.

42. Letters, p. 657.

> All art is dream, and what the day is done with is dreaming-ripe and what art has moulded religion accepts, and in the end all is in the wine-cup, all is the drunken fantasy, and the grapes begin to stammer.[43]

Ecstasy as the end of art and the aim of the artist is doggedly kept in view. At the same time, Yeats still keeps his belief in the dualistic nature of art and the artist.

Yeats's dualistic concept of art and the artist is essentially the same as that maintained before the publication of the Ideas of Good and Evil, although his emphasis shifts. In one of the essays titled "Discoveries" (1906) Yeats writes:

> The end of art is the ecstasy awakened by the presence before an ever-changing mind of what is permanent in the world, or by the arousing of that mind itself into the very delicate and fastidious mood habitual with it when it is seeking those permanent and recurring things.[44]

What the artist aims at is eternity, but it is approached through the things in this world. The aim of art is to arouse in our minds an experience of that eternity, but that aim is achieved only by presenting to the mind "what is permanent in the world," or recurring images. If art keeps its house between time and eternity, so the artist finds his place between the saint and the common world. In other words, the artist must have a double perspective--experiential and cognitive. His true concern is a vision of eternity, but his job is to give expression to what he sees.

After the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil, the Apollonian

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43. Essays and Introductions, p. 285.

44. Ibid., p. 287.

cognitive perspective becomes increasingly important for Yeats. He had earlier believed that Europe was entering upon a phase in which it felt a quickening of the Dionysian art-impulse, an impulse to get out of form in art. He now believes that the contrary impulse has come in him and around him. In his aesthetic he shows his interest more in the form and content of art than in its aim, more in the creative function of the artist rather than in his visionary experience.

In the idea of the artist and art we find Yeats's shift of emphasis. He had earlier believed that the poet was to take upon himself the task that fell from the shoulders of the priest. But he now believes that the artist's proper domain is here in this world. He had earlier maintained in such essays as "The Autumn of the Body" and "The Moods" that the artist should have the Dionysian experiential perspective--"the mysterious instinct," as he calls it in the essay "The Moods." Now he believes that Apollo should take the place of Dionysus. The artist's job is not to transcend form but to order it so as to achieve the desired effect. He writes in "Discoveries" (1906):

> All art is sensuous, but when a man puts only his contemplative nature and his more vague desires into his art, the sensuous images through which it speaks become broken, fleeting, uncertain, or are chosen for their distance from general experience, and all grows unsubstantial and fantastic.[45]

This is quite a switch of emphasis compared to what he envisaged as the artist's "only restraint" in the essay "The Moods." The artist should not be content with presenting a dim world of vague desires,

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45. Ibid., p. 293.

which will only tire imagination.

> If we are to sojourn there that world must grow consistent with itself, emotion must be related to emotion by a system of ordered images, as in the Divine Comedy. It must grow to be symbolic, that is, for the soul can only achieve a distinct separated life where many related objects at once distinguish and arouse its energies in their fulness.[46]

And this symbolic art must "arise out of a real belief" and take its stuff from the procession of images sanctioned by "a crowd of believers who could put into all those strange sights the strength of their belief and the rare testimony of their vision."[47] Thus the artist is not allowed to forget himself in his personal ecstasy, but must give expression to what he feels; and his manner needs discipline and a sanction by tradition.

Yeats's shift of emphasis to the cognitive perspective now makes it mandatory to make a clear distinction between the artist and the saint. The artist, whose main concern is how to perpetuate in art what is eternal, is essentially different from the saint, whose interest is his own eternity. In one essay in "Discoveries" Yeats discusses two types of asceticism: one is the type followed by the saint who goes straight to eternity, and the other is the type followed by the artist who evokes eternity by critically arranging images:

> The imaginative writer differs from the saint in that he identifies himself--to the neglect of his own soul, alas! --with the soul of the world, and frees himself from all that is impermanent in that soul, an ascetic not of women and wine, but of the newspapers. Those things that are permanent in the soul of the world, the great passions that trouble all and have but a brief recurring

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46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 294.

> life of flower and seed in any man, are indeed renounced by the saint, who seeks not an eternal art, but his own eternity. The artist stands between the saint and the world of impermanent things, and just in so far as his mind dwells on what is impermanent in his sense, on all that 'modern experience and the discussion of our interests,' that is to say, on what never recurs, as desire and hope, terror and weariness, spring and autumn, recur, will his mind losing rhythm grow critical, as distinguished from creative, and his emotions wither. He will think less of what he sees and more of his own attitude towards it, and will express his attitude by an essentially critical selection and emphasis.[48]

In another essay in "Discoveries" Yeats places the saint and the artist on the turning wheel of God, where the former goes to the center while the latter remains on the ring. The saint longs for calm and fixity while the artist yearns for life. The artist tries to eternalize what is perpetually returning, to grasp eternity in recurring images. His job is to animate what he sees around him and put into it the divine essence. If he sought for what is fixed and still, then "his style would become cold and monotonous, and his sense of beauty faint and sickly...."[49] The artist must be "content to find his pleasure in all that is for ever passing away that it may come again, in the beauty of woman, in the fragile flowers of spring, in momentary heroic passion, in whatever is most fleeting, most impassioned, as it were, for its own perfection, most eager to return in its glory."[50]

Yeats's wheel image is much the same as T. S. Eliot's, which also has the center where all the opposites of the "turning world" are reconciled. Like Yeats, Eliot recognizes the significance of the

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48. Ibid., p. 286.

49. Ibid., p. 287.

50. Ibid., pp. 287f.

world of time in attaining a vision of eternity. Though the eternal moment gained at the "still point of the turning world" is out of time, it can be remembered and made significant only in time. Thus, for Eliot, "Only through time time is conquered."[51] Yeats, however, is not so positive about the vision of eternity that the recurring images of the turning wheel promise. The artist may, after all, be seeing dreams in images that never completely recur:

> Yet [the artist] must endure the impermanent a little, for these things return, but not wholly, for no two faces are alike, and, it may be, had we more learned eyes, no two flowers.[52]

Of course, Eliot, too, recognized the limitations of art. Art is in time; as such, it is not eternal:

> Words move, music moves
> Only in time; but that which is only living
> Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence.[53]

Eliot, however, believed that art can reach eternity by its form, which is a resolution of movement and stillness:

> Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
> Moves in its stillness.[54]

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51. "Burnt Norton," II, l. 44. T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1952, p. 120.

52. Essays and Introductions, p. 288.

53. "Burnt Norton," V. ll. 1-4. T. S. Eliot, op. cit., p. 121.

54. Ibid.

Played music and written words pass away, but the inherent form remains eternal. There is no beginning nor end in the form, which exists before and after the music is played: "And all is always now."[55] Yeats did not share this belief. For him, art had only the evocative function; if it did not evoke a vision of eternity, it was forever lost in the dark void of time. If art had an eternal value, therefore, it must prove itself serviceable in its evocative function. Yeats had to construct his aesthetic theory on the keel of the double perspective--the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive.

Perhaps it is in the theory of tragedy that we find a consummation of Yeats's aesthetic. I have previously discussed Yeats's idea of tragic art as exemplified in the work of Dante and Villon.[56] Similar ideas are developed already in the essays contained in The Cutting of an Agate. Yeats's tragic theory may be reduced to the following points: 1) Tragedy is the noblest of the arts. 2) Tragedy aims at trance. 3) Tragedy arises out of conflict. 4) Tragedy is poetical. These points are closely interdependent, but the second and the third points are of particular interest to us.

Yeats thought that tragedy was the noblest art for a number of reasons. First of all, tragedy had to do with vast emotions to the neglect of the trivial sentiments of daily life. The vast emotions that tragedy deals with are not confined to particular individuals nor to particular ages; they belong to the Great Memory, from which the individual draws emotions that are of universal and eternal value.

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55. Ibid. "Burnt Norton," V. l. 13.

56. See Chapter II, pp. 26f.

Any art that fails to draw upon the Great Memory cannot be called truly great. Spenser's art, Yeats thought, was mostly of this kind. Spenser was the poet of his times and "his morality is official and impersonal--a system of life which it was his duty to support,"[57] which makes him a lesser artist than Dante. A poet should not be state-oriented, like Spenser. He must work with vast emotions that spring from the eternal element of his race, not from the daily life that passes with time. The art that embodies vast emotions is tragic art, for

> in mainly tragic art one distinguishes devices to exclude or lesson character, to diminish the power of that daily mood, to cheat or blind its too clear perception. If the real world is not altogether rejected, it is but touched here and there, and into the places we have left empty we summon rhythm, balance, pattern, images that remind us of vast emotions, the vagueness of past times, all the chimeras that haunt the edge of trance....[58]

The vast emotions that tragic art embodies lead to trance. It was pointed out earlier that there was a mystical basis for Yeats's idea of the Great Memory. Yeats's idea of trance as the aim of tragic art is a natural outcome of his general theory of the Great Memory. It stems from the monistic-experiential perspective. Tragic art helps man obliterate his individual consciousness and allows him to sojourn in the world of the Great Memory in a Dionysian ecstasy:

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57. "Edmund Spenser," Essays and Introductions, p. 369. The essay on Spenser was written in 1902 and first appeared as an introduction to Poems of Spenser (Edinburgh, 1906). It is noteworthy that Yeats included this essay in The Cutting of an Agate (1912), together with such essays as "Discoveries" and "Poetry and Tradition."

58. Essays and Introductions, p. 243.

> Tragic art, passionate art, the drowner of dykes, the confounder of understanding, moves us by setting us to reverie, by alluring us almost to the intensity of trance. The persons upon the stage, let us say, greaten till they are humanity itself. We feel our minds expand convulsively or spread out slowly like some moon-brightened image-crowded sea. That which is before our eyes perpetually vanishes and returns again in the midst of the excitement it creates, and the more enthralling it is, the more do we forget it.[59]

And this tragic art was, for Yeats, the supreme art, for "tragic ecstasy...is the best that art--perhaps life--can give."[60]

The monistic-experiential view of tragic art, however, is checked by Yeats's dualistic-cognitive perspective. The aim of tragic art is trance. That is fine; but it is also essential to consider of what tragic art is composed. Yeats's dualistic-cognitive perspective asserts itself strongly in his emphasis on conflict as the essential element of the tragic and in his recognition of art as an embodiment of ideas.

I previously pointed out that unity, for Yeats, arose out of conflict. Yeats grows increasingly emphatic about this process after the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil. The antimomical view of life was never abandoned till the end of his life; in fact, it takes more and more violent expressions as in his later poems on sex. Before the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil Yeats did realize that perfection in art stemmed from imperfection, but he was full of "vague desires" for perfection. Now he turns his artist's eye to "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart" from which that perfection is supposed to proceed.

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59. Ibid., p. 245.

60. Ibid., p. 239.

He now sees conflict not only in art but also in all human activities:

> I think that all noble things are the result of warfare; great nations and classes, of warfare in the visible world, great poetry and philosophy, of invisible warfare, the division of a mind within itself, a victory, the sacrifice of a man to himself.[61]

Art, in particular, arises out of such warfare in the artist's mind. Dante and Villon were two examples in whom the antinomical process took place. The earthly Beatrice led Dante to the yellow rose of Paradiso.

If tragic art is created by a mind in which conflict is a real crisis, tragic feeling has a strong hold on the minds of the people in an age of conflict. People are held together by a tragic sense of life when there is no security in their lives, but comic spirit becomes more appealing, Yeats thought, as life grows safe. Yeats believed that this is what happened in Ireland:

> Poetical tragedy, and indeed all the more intense forms of literature, had lost their hold on the general mass of men in other countries as life grew safe, and the sense of comedy which is the social bond in times of peace as tragic feeling is in times of war, had become the inspiration of popular art. I always knew this, but I believed that the memory of danger, and the reality of it seemed near enough sometimes, would last long enough to give Ireland her imaginative opportunity. I could not foresee that a new class, which had begun to rise into power under the shadow of Parnell, would change the nature of the Irish movement, which, needing no longer great sacrifices, nor bringing any great risk to individuals, could do without exceptional men, and those activities of the mind that are founded on the exceptional moment.[62]

The tragic, then, is equated with the heroic. The tragic spirit is an inclination of the mind toward some sort of synthesis of conflicting

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61. Ibid., p. 321.

62. Ibid., p. 259.

elements. It is an impulse toward a meaningful resolution of all antinomies. Its starting point is the world of turbulency, war, multiplicity; its destination is the world of peace and unity. It embraces no static vision, but enhances a spiritual progress from despair to ecstasy. Its corpus is made of warring elements, but its soul is of pure material. It mingles contraries, but it aims at a resolution of those contraries. This idea of tragic process was never abandoned throughout his life. As late as 1935 he wrote to Dorothy Wellesley:

> I think that the true poetic movement of our time is toward some heroic discipline. People much occupied with morality always lose heroic ecstasy. Those who have it most often are those Dowson described (I cannot find the poem but the lines run like this or something like this)
>
> Wine and women and song
> To us they belong
> To us the bitter and gay.
>
> 'Bitter and gay,' that is the heroic mood. When there is despair, public or private, when settled order seems lost, people look for strength within or without. Auden, Spender, all that seem the new movement look for strength in Marxian socialism, or in Major Douglas; they want marching feet. The lasting expression of our time is not this obvious choice but in a sense of something steellike and cold within the will, something passionate and cold.[63]

The spiritual movement toward the heroic mood is what is enhanced by tragic spirit. Its aim is "an act of faith and reason to make one rejoice in the midst of tragedy."[64]

The tragic art, then, proceed from despair to ecstasy; it has a vision of both eternity and time; it embodies both joy and sorrow. The more conflicting the antinomical elements, the nobler the art,

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63. Letters, pp. 836f.

64. Ibid., p. 838.

> for the nobleness of the arts is in the mingling of contraries, the extremity of sorrow, the extremity of joy, perfection of personality, the perfection of its surrender, overflowing turbulent energy, and marmorean stillness; and its red rose opens at the meeting of the two beams of the cross, and at the trysting-place of mortal and immortal, time and eternity.[65]

Another indication of the predominance of the cognitive perspective after the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil is Yeats's growing interest in the role of ideas in art. Yeats's attitude toward ideas, of course, was always ambivalent. He had earlier minimized their importance in art, though he could not eliminate them entirely. His association with the Rhymers, French symbolists, and "the Aesthetic School" of Arthur Hallam had made him sceptical about ideas, but he was, at the same time, strongly attracted to the popular beliefs of the Irish countryfolk. He notes this early contradiction of his aesthetic principle in the essay "Art and Ideas":

> Yet all the while envious of the centuries before the Renaissance, before the coming of our intellectual class with its separate interests, I filled my imagination with the popular beliefs of Ireland, gathering them up among forgotten novelists in the British Museum or in Sligo cottages. I sought some symbolic language reaching far into the past and associated with familiar names and conspicuous hills that I might not be alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses....[66]

Although he alone among the Rhymers consciously followed Arthur Hallam's criticism, Yeats was left discontented with the "delighted senses." Yet his distrust of ideas was so great that he wrote against them in rather strong words in a letter to George Russell (AE) in 1900:

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65. Essays and Introductions, p. 255.

66. Ibid., p. 349.

> I do not understand what you mean when you distinguish between the word that gives your idea and the more beautiful word. Unless you merely mean that beauty of detail must be subordinate to general effect, it seems to me just as if one should say 'I don't mind whether my sonata is musical or not so long as it conveys my idea.' Beauty is the end and law of poetry. It exists to find the beauty in all things, philosophy, nature, passion,--in what you will, and in so far as it rejects beauty it destroys its own right to exist. If you want to give ideas for their own sake write prose. In verse they are subordinate to beauty which is their soul. Isn't this obvious?[67]

By 1909, however, the situation was completely reversed. He now believed that ideas not only had their proper place in art but also gave strength to it. In his book on Eastern Painting Laurence Binyon showed Yeats that Whistler was wrong about Japanese painting, which, Whistler said "in the confidence of his American naivete,"[68] had no literary ideas. Hallam and his aesthetic school dissatisfied him, for they tried to sever the individual talent from tradition. Art, he came to believe, embodied the archetypal ideas handed down the generations. In his diary of 1909 he wrote:

> Hallam argued that poetry was the impression on the senses of certain very sensitive men. It was such with the pure artists, Keats and Shelley, but not so with the impure artists who, like Wordsworth, mixed up popular morality with their work. I now see that the literary element in painting, the moral element in poetry, are the means whereby the two arts are accepted into the social order and become a part of life and not things of the study and exhibition. Supreme art is a traditional statement of certain heroic and religious truths, passed on from age to age, modified by individual genius, but never abandoned.[69]

Art is something more than the sensuous and individual in nature.

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67. Letters, p. 343.

68. Essays and Introductions, p. 349.

69. Autobiographies, p. 490.

It is deeply rooted in the tradition, which gives art its sanction for genuine feeling and archetypal ideas. In "Art and Ideas" (1913) he wrote:

> The old images, the old emotions, awakened again to overwhelming life, like the gods Heine tells of, by the belief and passion of some new soul, are the only masterpiece.[70]

The exclusion of ideas from poetry and the infatuation with momentary sensation, which were a canon that Yeats and the Rhymers obeyed, "had deprived [them] of the power to mould vast material into a single image."[71] Archetypal ideas give art its life and power. One should not be afraid to use them. "Why," asks Yeats in "Art and Ideas,"

> should a man cease to be a scholar, a believer, a ritualist before he begins to paint or rhyme or to compose music, or why if he have a strong head should he put away any means of power?[72]

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Yeats valued ideas for their own sake. Ideas were good insofar as they gave poetry its life and power sanctioned by tradition. Meanwhile, the true aim of art remains ecstasy. Arts are not mere containers of ideas; they have their own life: "vast worlds moulded by their own weight like drops of water."[73] While emphasizing the importance of ideas in art, Yeats never abandoned the experiential view of art. In the same diary of 1909, in which he discredited Whistler and Hallam, he states his experiential view of tragedy:

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70. Essays and Introductions, pp. 352-53.

71. Ibid., p. 354.

72. Ibid., p. 355.

73. Ibid., p. 354.

> Tragedy is passion alone, and rejecting character, it gets form from motives, from the wandering of passion; while comedy is the clash of character. ... A poet creates tragedy from his own soul, that soul which is alike in all men. It has not joy, as we understand that word, but ecstasy, which is from the contemplation of things vaster than the individual and imperfectly seen, perhaps, by all those that still live. ...is not ecstasy some fulfilment of the soul in itself, some slow or sudden expansion of it like an overflowing well? Is not this what is meant by beauty?[74]

Yeats's attitude toward ideas in art was ambivalent. It is best expressed in a letter he wrote to his father in 1914. His double perspective is most evident in the following words:

> What you say is true about abstract ideas. They are one's curse and one has sometimes to work for months before they are eliminated, or till the map has become a country. Yet, in some curious way, they are connected with poetry or rather with passion, one half its life and yet its enemy.[75]

At the base of Yeats's tragic spirit, then, we find real dualism. It follows from this that the tragic art for Yeats is also dualistic. On the one hand, it consists of conflicting elements: joy and sorrow, stasis and motion, the eternal and the temporal, and so on. On the other hand, it aims at a resolution of all these conflicts. Again, on the one hand, it embodies ideas; while, on the other hand, it aims at ecstasy. Yeats had a concrete formula for this dualism. The formula was the double perspective for monistic experience and dualistic cognition. The polarities of perspective had a gyric relation with each other, in Yeatsian terms, with shifting emphasis. The monistic-experiential perspective was emphasized before the publication of Ideas of Good and Evil, while the dualistic-cognitive perspective was

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74. Autobiographies, pp. 470f.

75. Letters, p. 588.

emphasized afterwards. Neither perspective was completely dominated by the other. I have traced the gyric movement of the double perspective in Yeats's attitude toward art; it remains to see what significance this movement has to his meeting with the Noh.

III

The Noh drama of Japan developed from an earlier dramatic form called the Sarugaku, which flourished as a mimetic comedy in Japan in the middle of the Heian period (794-1185). The Sarugaku originated in China as a theatrical art of the lower type and was imported into Japan together with the Gagaku, a more refined type. The Sarugaku developed in Japan into a sort of a musical comedy in which the main features were humorous songs and dance. The Sarugaku players were usually of the lower class, who made their living solely out of the use of their talent. Their performance was a part of the entertainment for the aristocratic audience at religious festivals. Their performance was characterized by humorous realism whereby the popular manners were imitated. They were not concerned with dramatization of historical events nor with literary or philosophical ideas. Indeed, their performance was not genuinely "dramatic," for it did not involve a clash of characters that makes plot possible. The performance was done mainly by a single character and only occasionally by two.

During the Kamakura period (1192-1333), the Sarugaku took a definite theatrical form. The performance was sustained by a plot involving two or more characters. The theatrical development along this line produced what was later called the Kyogen. In parallel with this another line

of development took place. The mimetic element of the Sarugaku divested itself of humorous realism and adopted dance and music, which were becoming increasinly popular, for its medium of expression. It moved away from light humor and satire and tended toward gravity and refinement. This line of development found its fulfilment in the highly sophisticated form of theatrical art known as the Noh.

In the Muromachi period (1392-1573) the Noh theater enjoyed its heyday under the patronage of the Shogun, whose financial support made it possible for the Noh players to concentrate on perfecting their art. In its technical aspect the Noh art reached its supreme refinement through the efforts of Kannami and his son Zeami, who left behind them a unique Noh theory to which later Noh players were to turn for their artistic authority. Kannami and Zeami brought about a revolution in the art of the Noh by adapting to their performance the kusemai, a type of dance accompanied by singing which had become popular since the end of the Kamakura period. The adoption of the kusemai caused the Noh to take quite a different direction from the original genre of the Sarugaku, of which the basic elements were humor and mimesis. Instead of realistic representations and mockery of popular manners, the graceful presentation of the essences of things in dancing became the main concern of the Noh players. Kannami and Zeami perfected the new genre and postulated a theory of it.

Of the two founders of the Noh drama, Zeami the son made outstanding contributions to the development of the genre in his multifarious capacities, as a player, stage director, playwright, as well as theorist. One Japanese Noh scholar looks upon Zeami's genius as a combination of

Sophocles' and Aristotle's.[76] Although such an estimation hardly does justice either to Zeami or to the Greek dramatist and the philosopher, we do find in Zeami an extrordinary combination of the genius of an artist and that of a systematic thinker. Trained directly and closely by his father, Zeami's art was brought to perfection early in his life and was high in favor of Shogun Yoshimitsu. Part of the Noh theory was secretly taught him by his father, but he is generally credited with its systematization.

Zeami is known to have written twenty-three books, of which eighteen are extant. The books were meant to be secret, were jealously guarded as a secret tradition by generations of Noh players, and were not made public until after the Meiji Revolution (1868). Out of the eighteen extant books the most important one is perhaps the Kadensho, which was written by Zeami at the age of thirty-eight and is in the form of a record of his father Kannami's secret instruction.[77] Since it would require a book to discuss the whole book, let alone the other writings of Zeami, I shall discuss the three basic elements of the Noh that are expounded in the book: the element of mimesis, the element of yugen, the element of hana (flower). In the book Zeami has explanations of the form and content of the Noh plays and detailed instructions as to the training of players and actual performance on the stage. Such explanations and instructions on artistry are closely related to the general theory of the Noh art; therefore, they will be dealt with as

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76. Toyoichiro Nogami, Zeami Motokiyo, Tokyo: Sogensha, 1942, p. 165.

77. It is generally agreed that the Kadensho is a faithful record of Kannami's instruction. However, since the book was written by Zeami who is credited with systematizing the Noh theory, I shall hereafter refer to Zeami as the author of the book and the theory.

need arises in the discussion of the three basic elements mentioned above.

Mimesis is an important element of art that the Noh inherited from the Sarugaku. In the older genre it meant realistic and humorous representations of manners, which were often exaggerated in order to heighten the humorous and satirical effect. When it was inherited by the Noh it underwent a considerable transformation.

In the first place, humor and satire disappear from Zeami's idea of imitation. Instead, we find beauty and elegance as the end of the mimetic art. Secondly, the superficial imitation of manners is replaced by the imitation of the essences of human types. Thirdly, the concept of imitation is raised to the transcendental level of "no imitation": a perfect union of the imitator and the imitated.

In the prologue of the second essay of the Kadensho, Zeami explains how important imitation is in the art of the Noh:

> The objects of imitation are so numerous that they cannot be described adequately. However, since imitation is extremely important, the objects [of imitation] must be studied closely. Now, the true aim of imitation is faithfully to represent whatever is imitated.[78]

The principle laid down here is not far from the modern concept of verisimilitude. It is generally understood that Zeami's true aim was to counterbalance the exaggerated practice of the earlier Sarugaku players. Zeami, however, went further, for he hastens to qualify the

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78. Asaji Nose, Zeami Jurokubushu Hyoshaku (An annotated edition of Zeami's sixteen books), Tokyo: Iwanami, 1949, p. 35. This and all subsequent English versions of the quotations from Zeami's work are my translation. I have consulted the modern Japanese versions by Asaji Nose and Kazuma Kawase when doubt arose in construing Zeami's original version.

statement quoted above:

> It is necessary, however, to know that there are different degrees of imitation.[79]

Zeami distinguishes two general classes: nobility and peasantry. Of the two the former is more desirable as the object of imitation and should be imitated closely, for noble persons have grace and beauty in their manners. Zeami admits that it is impossible for the ungraceful Noh players to imitate noble persons perfectly, but he says that they should do their best "to imitate as faithfully as possible the persons of the higher stations of life and such manners as have grace and beauty."[80] Of peasants Zeami had an extremely low estimation as the object of imitation. They should not be imitated at all unless their manners are graceful and beautiful. Thus it is plain that Zeami's idea of imitation is strongly colored with aestheticism.

This aestheticism of Zeami was derived from the concept of yugen[81] which was highly appreciated in poetry and dance by the aristocracy and warriors of medieval Japan. Zeami evidently tried to please his aristocratic audience. Ungraceful manners of peasants, Zeami advises, should not be presented to the noble audience, for "if they are presented, they are so vulgar that they will not be appreciated."[82] Even the imitation of an old man should be beautiful and pleasing to the eye. It should be "as if a flower bloomed upon an old tree."[83]

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79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. The concept of yugen will be discussed in detail later.

82. Nose, op.cit., p. 35.

83. Ibid., p. 43.

Zeami's mimetic theory was thus characterized by aestheticism; it was further characterized by the concept of essence ("hon-i"). Zeami contributed to the development of the Noh drama by purging it of vulgar realism. Imitation for Zeami did not mean surface realism; it meant to grasp the essence of what is to be imitated and present it in such a manner as will give the audience a truth-like impression. We can deduce from Zeami's second essay two ways whereby imitation may be accomplished effectively. One way is to grasp some outstanding traits of the object of imitation. The following suggestion on the imitation of the Chinaman is illuminating:

> No matter how one may try to be like a Chinaman in singing and acting, one would not impress the audience; it is therefore advisible to contrive one point of resemblance. This seeming anti-realism is universally applicable in the act of imitation. Anti-realism is not at all desirable; but since it is impossible to imitate the Chinaman perfectly, a strange manner will impress the audience.[84]

It is clear that Zeami was not at all concerned with the surface detail of the object of imitation. His interest was the effect of imitation on the audience. Even the objects of imitation are reduced into three main human types: the woman, the aged person and the warrior. This alone is enough to prove Zeami's disinclination to surface realism.

The other way to accomplish imitation effectively is to grasp what makes things appear the way they do; not the appearance itself, but the cause of it; not human behavior itself, but the motive. Zeami refers to it as the "hon-i" (or the heart) of things in his essays. Zeami warns against the tendency of inexperienced Noh players to

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84. Ibid., pp. 66f.

imitate the appearance and behavior of a character to the neglect of what really makes the character appear and behave the way he does. Concerning the imitation of madness he writes:

> Even players with considerable experience simply act like a mad man without knowing what made him mad with the result that the audience is not moved. When madness caused by mental suffering is to be imitated, one would certainly move and interest the audience if one should endeavor to act madness mindful of the mental suffering as the heart and the act of madness as the flower (corpus) of his acting.[85]

We may say that what Zeami means by "hon-i" is the essence of things. He believed that unless the essence of what is to be imitated is expressed it will not appear real. Simple feigning of the appearance of an old man, for instance, would not make an actor look like an old man; it is essential for the actor to grasp the old man's hidden mind: an old man wishes to look young but his physical strength fails him. In the last essay of the Kadensho Zeami gives the cue:

> It is essential not to act like an old man. Dancing and acting mean to tap the feet and wave the hands to the rhythm and music. An old man's behavior is such that he would be slightly behind the rhythm of the drum and songs. This gives us the principle of imitation of an old man. As long as this principle is firmly held in mind, other things should be done as gaily as possible. For, an old man is wont to act young; however, since he is slow of motion and hard of hearing due to his old age, his physical strength betrays his wishes. To know this principle is essential to the imitation of an old man. Thus, one should act young as an old man wishes to act, which, after all, means to imitate the mind and behavior of an old man envious of the young. However, an old man could not help lagging behind the rhythm and music, no matter how he tried to act like a young man. This "youngish behavior" of an old man is what creates novelty: a flower blooms upon an old tree.[86]

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85. Ibid., p. 48.

86. Ibid., p. 229.

The uniqueness of Zeami's theory of imitation lies in the idea of essence. The Noh since Zeami strictly adhered to this idea. In consequence, it tended toward symbolism and patternization of movements. It sacrificed surface realism to artistic expression of the essence of things in the way that might impress the audience. Thus, according to a modern Noh commentator, the ghost is more real than the living man, for "the living man has individual traits and they are disturbing to the Noh. When such superfluity is completely removed, there emerges what constitutes the core of a character."[87] The commentator ascribes the reason why the Noh generally prefers the ghost as the main character (the shite) to this belief in essence.

The theory of imitation assumes dualism for artistic expression and creation as long as the act of imitation remains as such. That is, mimetic art is impossible without the dualistic framework of the imitator and the imitated. Zeami's theory, however, ultimately transcends this dualistic framework. In the essay on imitation in the Kadensho he started with "the true aim of imitation is faithfully to represent whatever is imitated"; in the final essay in the same book he reveals the ultimate aim of imitation in the following words:

> In the act of imitation there is the level of no imitation. When the act of imitation is perfectly carried out and the actor becomes the thing itself, the actor will no longer have the desire to imitate.[88]

This is echoed in another book, the Kakyo: "In the imitation of all human types, the actor should first learn to become the thing itself,

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87. Masako Shirasu, O-Noh (The Noh), Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1963, pp. 96f.

88. Nose, op. cit., p. 227.

and then act."[89] Thus in Zeami's theory the immediate aim of faithful imitation is relinquished for the sake of the ultimate aim of no imitation. The dualistic world of cognition, where imitation is possible, is sublimated to the monistic world of experience, where the imitator is fused with the imitated.

Another basic element of the Noh in the theory of Zeami is yugen. The meaning of yugen has been subject to various interpretations. Differences of opinion arise mainly from the historical consideration of the term. Some interpreters of the term derive its meaning from the Kokinshu,[90] in which the earliest use of the word is found; some trace the development of the meaning of the word in the poetic tradition of medieval Japan; some try to find the use of the word in the intellectual milieu of Zeami. Although it is admitted that such historical considerations do throw much light on the meaning of the word, it is important in our present discussion to concentrate on its meaning as it is used by Zeami in his writing, for Zeami defines the term quite clearly and uses it in that sense consistently in his theory of the Noh.[91]

Zeami's concept of yugen is sensuous. He attached to the meaning of the word no more than beauty and elegance as perceived by the human senses. We see clearly what he means in the following definition found

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89. Ibid., p. 295.

90. An anthology of Japanese poetry edited by Kino-Tsurayuki in 905.

91. Especially in relation to Yeats's understanding of the Noh, Zeami's own definition of the word must be faithfully adhered to. To bring various historical meanings of the word into the discussion of the Yeats-Noh relationship only causes confusion. A good example is Wilson's study in which the term "yugen" is taken to mean "ideal beauty" and "mysterious calm," in which senses Zeami never used the term.

in the Kakyo:

> Now then, what constitutes yugen? Firstly, surveying various stations of life that exist in our society, we may perhaps say that the noble manners and the distinguished appearance of the peers represent the state of yugen. Yugen, then, lies in what is simply beautiful and gentle. Gentleness of manners constitutes the yugen of personality. Elegance of speech modeled after the noble persons, which is constantly maintained even in careless speech, constitutes the yugen of speech. And in music, when the tune is of beautiful and flowing kind, gentle and elegant to the ear, it constitutes the yugen of music. Dance, when, after a thorough practice, it pleases the eye by producing a beautiful and quiet effect in the movement of the body, represents the yugen of dance. And in the imitation of the three human types, when the appearance is beautiful in each type, it represents yugen.[92]

According to this definition there is nothing mysterious or transcendental about the concept of yugen. Zeami meant by it that which pleases the senses. It was an aesthetic device to check the danger of vulgarity into which the mimetic art was apt to fall.

The sensuous nature of yugen is also emphasized in numerous references throughout the Kadensho. In the sixth essay in the book, for instance, we find:

> The two (yugen and that which is trong) are found in the nature of the things themselves. For instance, in human types, the noble lady, the elegant lady, the beautiful lady, the handsome man, and in plants, various kinds of flowers, are of yugen in form. And, the warrior, the violent man, the demon, the god, the pine tree, the cedar, etc. are strong things.[93]

Elsewhere in the Kadensho Kannami says in reply to Zeami's question:[94] "The main actor who appears beautiful, no matter how you look at him,

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92. Nose, op.cit., pp. 358f.

93. Ibid., p. 193.

94. The reference is to the third essay, which is really a dialogue between Zeami and his father, Kannami.

represents yugen."[95] And concerning the training of a child in the art of the Noh, Zeami says that the child of twelve or thirteen "is yugen itself no matter how he acts, because he wears children's costume."[96]

Thus, in Zeami's theory, yugen is an aesthetic quality which is sensuous in nature. When Zeami defined yugen as that which "is simply beautiful and gentle,"[96] he must have had in mind no more than the actor's appearance on the stage. He repeatedly emphasizes the importance of beautiful appearance throughout his essays. He thought, in fact, that the act of imitation loses its purpose if the beautiful appearance of the actor is lost sight of in his acting. He strongly urges the actor to "learn the various aspects of yugen that have hitherto been enumerated, absorb them into [his] system, and never leave [them] no matter what is to be imitated."[97] It should also be remembered, Zeami urges, that "although various things may be imitated, what creates yugen is an appearance that is beautiful."[98] For Zeami yugen meant "all the beautiful things that are seen and heard."[99]

The relationship of the concept of yugen to that of imitation is close, indeed. In one sense, as I pointed out earlier, yugen is an aesthetic check upon the vulgarity of imitation practiced in the earlier Sarugaku. Zeami's immediate aim as an innovator of the Sarugaku was to transform the mimetic art into a more refined genre.

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95. Nose, op. cit., p. 112.

96. Ibid., p. 13.

97. Ibid., p. 362.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid., p. 365.

His ultimate aim, however, was to orient the basically mimetic art of the Noh to the ideal of aesthetic experience. The human types are not imitated per se. They are imitated for the sake of beauty that they produce. The ultimate aim of imitation is, therefore, to create yugen. Thus in Zeami's theory the supreme level of imitation—the level of no imitation—is equated with the supreme attainment of yugen:

> Know that all the beautiful things that are seen and heard represent yugen. One that enters the realm of yugen is he who makes this principle his own working principle and becomes that which embodies yugen. He who only wishes to attain yugen while neglecting to study these aspects of it or to become the thing [of yugen] itself will never attain yugen.[100]

The supreme level of imitation, for Zeami, was the level of no imitation. The actor was expected to attain the level at which he no longer wishes to imitate but becomes the thing itself. Likewise, a true attainment of yugen is to become the thing of yugen itself. One that wishes to imitate or to attain yugen has not reached the supreme level of art.

The concept of imitation and the concept of yugen find their synthesis in the third basic element of the Noh--the concept of flower. That is, when the act of imitation attains its supreme level, it enters the realm of yugen, which produces an artistic effect that Zeami calls hana, or flower. When an accomplished actor does his best, his performance is like the blooming of a flower, the sum total of his artistic effort which is unique and interesting. Whether his performance is a flower or not, of course, depends on the audience. If the audience is duly impressed and attracted by it, then it may be called a flower.

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100. Ibid., p. 365.

In order to impress the audience, however, his imitative act must have reached its supreme level and have created yugen. In other words, the actor must create beauty on the stage as naturally as the thing he is imitating.

There are two important factors that make an actor's performance bloom into a flower. To begin with, his performance must be interesting to the audience. Unless the audience is impressed with the actor's performance, the whole purpose of art is lost. Zeami is keenly conscious of the audience as the sole judge of his art. It is not too much to say that the purpose of putting his Noh theory into writing was to let his posterity know how to impress the audience. His Noh theory is thus characteristically audience-oriented. In the fifth essay of the Kadensho he writes:

> There are many ways to win fame in the art of the Noh. The accomplished artist finds it difficult to be appreciated by men of no taste, while the unaccomplished artist is never appreciated by men of taste. ... However, a truly accomplished artist who is ingenious enough would act in the way that would impress even men of no taste. An actor with such ingenuity and accomplishment may be called the one who has attained the flower. An actor who has attained this level of art will never be overwhelmed by a young actor no matter how old he becomes. Such an actor would be universally recognized as an accomplished actor and would be appreciated even by remote country folk. ... The purpose of writing this Kadensho is to reveal the true meaning of this accomplishment of art.[101]

What Zeami aimed at, then, was a universal acceptance. In order for his art to be accepted, he realized, his art must be universally interesting, as a flower is.

The second factor that makes an actor's performance a flower is uniqueness. If an actor is like any other actor and if his

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101. Ibid., p. 151.

performance is always the same, he will tire the audience. He must be different from other actors and he must always have a fresh charm. A flower is universally appreciated because it blooms at a particular time and is unique. If it was like any other flower and bloomed all the year round, Zeami maintained, it would not attract us. The Noh actor must have this uniqueness in his art.

> In order to understand the meaning of flower in this secret instruction, one should first observe how a flower of nature blooms and thereby understand how all [art] came to be likened to a flower. Now, people appreciate flowers because they are all seasonal and have their own time to bloom. In the Noh, too, the uniqueness with which it impresses the audience makes the art interesting. Thus, "flower," "unique" and "interesting" mean the same thing.[102]

The unique charm of a flower of nature, then, is something that an actor must have in his art.

I hope I have clarified the meaning of flower in Zeami's Noh theory. It is the sum total of an actor's artistic effort. It subsumes an act of imitation on the part of the actor and the aesthetic quality of yugen on the part of the imitated. The flower is the synthesis of the two. It emerges when the act of imitation reaches its supreme level. In Zeami's own words:

> In the act of imitation there is the level of no imitation. When the act of imitation is perfectly carried out and the actor becomes the thing itself, the actor will no longer have the desire to imitate. Whereupon, if the actor concentrates upon the "interesting," a flower will certainly emerge.[103]

The flower is thus an aesthetic experience of the actor as well as of

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102. Ibid., p. 213.

103. Ibid., p. 227.

the audience.

The Noh, it is clear now, is essentially an experiential art. It is not interested in story nor in ideas; its sole interest is how to create an aesthetic experience--the blooming of a flower. The whole artistic endeavor--of acting and of writing Noh texts--is guided by this interest. In the way of acting, a major part of the action is devoted to the main actor's dance, and action consists of little or no conflict of forces. The narrative interest is slight and the stories told are generally short and simple. A Noh writer is expected to choose for his material well known stories in the classical Chinese and Japanese literature that are particularly appropriate for producing yugen. Originality is not therefore highly valued in the Noh. The narrative element is valuable insofar as it produces yugen and helps the actor's art bloom into a flower.

The shite (main actor) is all-important in the Noh. An entire piece is constructed around the shite's performance. Zeami cautions that rhetorical emphases must be placed in the shite's speech. In the sixth essay in the Kadensho he warns against using important words in speeches not spoken by the shite: "Do not use important words in places that have nothing to do with the shite's speech or his action."[104] The reason is that "the audience is wont to be impressed with the interesting speech and action of none other than the main actor."[105] In the Nosakusho (the Art of Writing Noh Plays) Zeami writes: "Beautiful words and well-known phrases must be used for the shite's speech."[106]

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104. Ibid., p. 169.

105. Ibid., pp. 169f.

106. Ibid., p. 601.

Minutest care must be taken even in the choice of words to be spoken by the shite. The entire piece should naturally be oriented toward the role of the main actor. Zeami even goes so far as to suggest that the personality of the main actor should determine the nature of the whole piece. In the Nosakusho he cautioned:

> It is most important, therefore, to suit the material to the personality of the shite in writing a Noh piece. A Noh writer should be able to discriminate [the type of] the Noh that is becoming to the character of the shite.[107]

The whole piece in the Noh is constructed so as to make the bud of yugen that the shite has in him open into a beautiful flower. Of course, there is the waki (the side character), but his role is far less significant in comparison to the shite's and his part is to help the shite, and not to oppose him. In most Noh plays the waki is a journeying priest who draws a story out of the shite, who tells the story--usually his own story--in dance and songs. While the shite is telling his story, the waki quietly sits by the waki-bashira (the pole of the waki), one of the four poles that hold the ceiling of the Noh stage.

It must be remembered, however, that the narrative interest is minimized in the Noh. The story is not told for its own sake, but is used as a device whereby the beauty of yugen is effectively brought about on stage. Using an original story in a Noh play is discouraged. The measure of excellence of the Noh does not lie in originality but in whether or not a flower has bloomed. A Noh writer, instead of boasting of his originality, is expected to work on "authentic" material, as Zeami calls it, which has been tested by tradition for

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107. Ibid., pp. 651f.

the quality of yugen. In other words, the writer's craftsmanship is far more important than his genius. In the sixth essay of the Kadensho we find: "Writing of the Noh text is of vital importance in this art. A good Noh piece requires only craftsmanship, not profound learning or genius."[108] What, then, is a good Noh piece? Zeami's answer is: "A good Noh piece is one that is authentic in the traditional literature and has uniqueness, emphases and a quality of yugen."[109]

It is clear, then, that the Noh is a theatrical art centering around the main actor, the shite, who appears before the audience as an incarnation of yugen, a blooming flower. Its aesthetic is singularly monistic and its ideal is experiential.

IV

The kind of drama that Zeami and his father, Kannami, tried to found was thus monistic-experiential in nature. It is understandable, therefore, that Yeats was strongly attracted to the Noh. Yeats was opposed, we remember, to the traditional stage of the West where characters clashed with each other and to the modern realistic school which denied the audience passionate reverie. The Noh holds the position antithetical to the drama of the West in theory and practice.

Generally speaking, what characterizes the Western drama is its dualistic-cognitive nature. It assumes the world of duality in which

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108. Ibid., p. 169.

109. Ibid., p. 173.

conflict of forces occurs. It also assumes the world of cognition in which recounting a history of a conflict of forces is not only possible but interesting. Its interest is in an exploration of human action, and its finding is perhaps what we might call "human nature." In the words of a modern student of drama: "Drama is one, and perhaps the major, instrument invented by human beings for the exploration and explanation of the nature of man."[110]

The mimetic theory of Aristotle is also rooted in the dualistic-cognitive perspective. The idea of imitation is based on the dualistic relation of the imitator and the imitated, and Aristotle let the two remain separated. A human action, which is the object of imitation, consists of a series of events. Thus, the history of a human action, or the plot, gets the primary emphasis in Aristotle's theory. Of the six parts of tragedy, according to Aristotle, the plot is the most important of all. In the Poetics we find:

> But the most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all.[111]

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110. Hubert Heffner, "Towards a Definition of Form in Drama," Classical Drama and Its Influence, M. J. Anderson ed., London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965, p. 153.

111. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, translated and with notes by S. H. Butcher, Dover Publications, Inc., 1951, pp. 25f.

The least important of all, by contrast, is the spectacle:

> The Spectacle has, indeed, an emotional attraction of its own, but, of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry. For the power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors.[112]

We find a number of antitheses between Aristotle and Zeami. For Aristotle the plot is "the soul of a tragedy,"[113] while, for Zeami, it is a device whereby yugen is created. While Aristotle insists that an action is to be imitated, Zeami is mainly interested in three human types: aged person, woman, and warrior. The spectacle, which is of the least importance in Aristotle's theory, is of prime importance in Zeami's. The list of antitheses does not end here. They all come to this--that the two dramatic theorists of the East and the West had perspectives antithetical to each other: Zeami had the monistic-experiential perspective, which aimed at a resolution of duality and the creation of a purely aesthetic experience in the realm of art; Aristotle, on the other hand, had the dualistic-cognitive perspective, which affirmed the world of duality where it was possible for the imitator to create a sense of pleasure by a miming act, and which believed in the ability of the mind to perceive the original action being imitated.

The didactic theory of Renaissance theorists is also dualistic-cognitive in nature. Combining the Aristotelian mimetic theory with the typically Renaissance love of didacticism, it assumed the dualistic world of the imitator and the imitated, and emphasized the learning process rather than pleasure. Thus, tragedy, says Sidney,

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112. Ibid., p. 29.

113. Ibid.

> openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue, that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours; that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded.[114]

The didactic purpose is achieved by showing an illustrious example. Here again the dramatic interest is in an exploration of human action, which is antithetical to Zeami's interest in yugen.

The modern realistic drama, which antagonized Yeats so much, is based on the dualistic-cognitive perspective beyond doubt. Although Ibsen and his followers are admitedly different from their Greek and Elizabethan predecessors in their concept of drama and its significance to life, they nevertheless maintain the same dualistic-cognitive interest in assuming a critical position to the social conventions of their time and taking pathological interest in human action. The only significant difference between the modern realists and the ancients perhaps lies in the fact that the modern realists have brought the dualistic-cognitive perspective to play in the immediate, commonplace milieu. Thus, the modern realistic drama also tends toward an exploration of human action.

Risking an over-simplification, it may be possible to say that the main current of Western drama represents a school of aesthetic that takes an active interest in an exploration of human action and in reconstructing that action into a coherent whole. The work involves dualistic thinking and a cognitive process of the mind. Whether this formula is an over-simplification or not, it was this tendency to which

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114. Sir Philip Sidney, The Defense of Poesy, Boston: Ginn Co., 1890, p. 28.

Yeats responded unfavorably. Yeats was consistently against "all art that is... mere story-telling" and declared "unimaginative" all arts that "are content to set a piece of the world as we know it in a place by itself, to put their photographs as it were in a plush or a plain frame."[115] The monistic-experiential pull was too strong for Yeats to be completely at home in the dualistic-cognitive tradition of the West.

Now, it was this monistic-experiential pull that caused Yeats to respond favorably to the Noh. Although there is no denying the fact that lack of information led Yeats to some outrageous misconceptions, such as confusing the Noh dance with the Joruri,[116] his understanding of the Noh is accurate in some respects. Insofar as the Noh tended away from exploration and portraiture, Yeats found it quite congenial.

It would be jumping to a conclusion, however, to infer from the above discussion that Yeats, repelled by the traditional dramatic theory and practice of the West, completely baptized himself into the Eastern school of Zeami. Yeats's perspective was neither completely Eastern nor, of course, completely Western: his was a double perspective. He had, so to speak, one foot in the East and the other in the West. He gained from this anomalous position something which earned his dramas "a sphere by themselves"[117] in the development of Western

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115. Essays and Introductions, p. 224.

116. The Joruri is a puppet drama which has its own tradition; its genesis is in the mist of history. "The most famous of all Japanese dramatists" Yeats mentions in his essay "Certain Noble Plays of Japan" is Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Joruri dramatist who lived from 1653 to 1724. He is often called the Shakespeare of Japan.

117. Alladyce Nicoll, British Drama, an Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time, London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1953, p. 410.

drama. However, he lost as much as he gained from either side. His dramatic theory and practice consequently became characteristically his own. His schooling in the Noh aesthetic and his Noh-like dramas must be considered in this light.

In Sections V, VI, and VII of "Certain Noble Plays of Japan," Yeats explains the Noh drama of Japan. In these sections he points out the qualities of "intimacy" and "distance" that he finds in the Noh. He emphasizes its tendency away from surface realism. "No 'naturalistic' effect is sought," he observes.[118] The use of masks, the interest in the rhythm, and the simple and suggestive stage-setting characterize the Noh. These characteristics help simplify the Noh.

Earlier in the essay Yeats said that the stage must be simplified in order to achieve intimacy. The use of the mask helps in this, because it has a stilling effect which helps produce deep feeling. The mask will also suppress the realistic facial expressions of the actor. Explaining the use of a mask in his own play, he writes:

> A mask will enable me to substitute for the face of some commonplace player, or for that face repainted to suit his own vulgar fancy, the fine invention of a sculptor, and to bring the audience close enough to the play to hear every inflection of the voice. A mask never seems but a dirty face, and no matter how close you go is yet a work of art; nor shall we lose by stilling the movement of the features, for deep feeling is expressed by a movement of the whole body. In poetical painting and in sculpture the face seems the nobler for lacking curiosity, alert attention, all that we sum up under the famous word of the realists, 'vitality.'[119]

Yeats's use of a mask definitely has a disciplinary purpose. The mask is expected to check surface realism and direct the attention of the

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118. Essays and Introductions, p. 230.

119. Ibid., p. 226.

audience to perceiving the inner truth. The disciplinary function of the mask is generally acknowledged in the Noh. Zeami has very little to say about the function of the mask, but his remark about the hitamen (the unmasked face) is helpful:

> It [the hitamen] imitates a living person and therefore should not be difficult. Strangely enough, however, it is hardly worth seeing unless the [actor's] art is superior. As for the manner of imitation, it depends, of course, on individual cases. Some try to make facial expressions different from their usual faces, although there is no reason why they should counterfeit facial expressions. It is unbearable to see such [an act of imitation]. One should imitate only the behavior and the general impression of what he is imitating, and keep his face as it usually is.[120]

Zeami abhorred the realistic expressions some of his contemporary Noh players liked to make when they acted living persons without using masks. Noh players today are still expected to keep a straight face when they appear on stage without a mask on. A high standard of art is required to create a deep feeling without resorting to facial expressions. Thus in the Noh, facial expressions are subject to discipline. In an imitation of a masked figure the mask does the disciplinary function; in the case of an unmasked figure, an internal discipline is necessary.

Like Yeats, Zeami also realized the artistic quality of masks. In the Sarugaku-dangi he gives a list of masterpieces that were available for his use at the time. One of them even inspired him in his dream. For Zeami, however, a mask was an instrument as well as a work of art. He even advised that the top of a mask be cut off if it got in the way of the head gear. He also advised that a player should

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120. Nose, op. cit., pp. 46f.

be careful about the choice of a mask and "should choose one that suits the level of art he has attained."[121] For Zeami, therefore, a mask was more than a disciplinary device or a work of art: it was an instrument that was to be actively used for creating yugen. In other words, a mask was a component of the flower that bloomed on the stage. For Yeats it was a device to create intimacy.

Yeats also found the interest in rhythm characteristic of the Noh. His enthusiasm was particularly stirred by 1) the fact that a dance, "instead of the disordered passion of nature," marked the climax, 2) seeming indifference to the human form, and 3) an intensity of rhythm. These features cause the Noh to tend away from a "naturalistic" effect. The rhythmical elements form, of course, the vital part of the Noh. Zeami stipulated two rhythmical parts and three human types as the essential elements of the Noh. The two rhythmical parts were song and dance. The three human types included the aged person, the woman and the warrior. A mimetic act of the three human types performed in a dance accompanied by singing was to produce an effect of yugen.

Yeats was particularly impressed with the fact that it was not the human form but the rhythm to which it moved that the Noh was interested in.

> The interest is not in the human form but in the rhythm to which it moves, and the triumph of their art is to express the rhythm in its intensity.[122]

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121. Nose, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 565.

122. Essays and Introductions, p. 231.

The human form, however, is an indispensable element of the Noh. Yugen, Zeami said, was derived from the form itself. Even an aged person was a flower upon an old tree. Yeats's enthusiasm for the two rhythmical parts of the Noh comes from his belief that words and music are the archetypal media of the theatrical art. "The theatre began in ritual,"[123] Yeats believed, and in ritual song had priority over action. In drama song originally had the same position. "We have forgotten," Yeats wrote to the editor of the Daily Chronicle, "that the Drama began in the chanted ode, and that whenever it has been great it has been written to delight our eyes, but to delight our ears more than our eyes."[124] A dance, for Yeats, meant a human "body swayed to music," in "a series of positions and movements."

That Yeats should have overlooked the importance that the Noh places on the human form is an interesting fact. It clearly shows the cleavage that lies between Yeats and Zeami in their artistic ideals. Yeats had little faith in the human form for a number of reasons. For one thing, he believed that drama began in ritual in the form of a chanted ode, in which the magical power of words was of prime importance. As the happy shepherd sings, "Words alone are certain good," and the theater "cannot come to its greatness again without recalling words to their ancient sovereignty."[125] The principle of intimacy was born of this faith in words. Intimacy creates a natural atmosphere in which words can fully exert their power.

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123. Ibid., p. 170.

124. Letters, p. 309.

125. Essays and Introductions, p. 170.

A song, too, means a series of words that have "taken fire." In order to be artistically effective, words must move imperceptibly into chanting, and no artificiality must be allowed in the process.

> What was the good of writing a love-song if the singer pronounced love 'lo-o-o-o-o-ve,' or even if he said 'love,' but did not give it its exact place and weight in the rhythm? Like every other poet, I spoke verses in a kind of chant when I was making them; and sometimes, when I was alone on a country road, I would speak them in a loud chanting voice, and feel that if I dared I would speak them in that way to other people.[126]

The relationship between music and speech is thus close. In "Poems for Psaltery" (1907), a section added to "Speaking to the Psaltery," Yeats suggests that music developed from speech:

> The relation between music and speech will yet become the subject of science, not less than the occasion of artistic discovery. I suggest that we will discover in this relation a very early stage in the development of music, with its own great beauty, and that those who love lyric poetry but cannot tell one tune from another repeat a state of mind which created music and yet was incapable of the emotional abstraction which delights in patterns of sound separated from words.[127]

And in a letter to the editor of the Academy, June 7, 1902, he makes the same suggestion in simpler terms:

> I imagine men spoke their verses first to a regulated pitch without a tune, and then, eager for variety, spoke to tunes which gradually became themselves the chief preoccupation until speech died out in music.[128]

The relationship between words and music was a theme which never left

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126. Ibid., p. 14.

127. Ibid., p. 20.

128. Letters, p. 374.

Yeats's mind throughout his life. Sometimes, as will be discussed later, he tended to separate the two by emphasizing one or the other; but mostly he tried to fuse the two. Toward the end of life he wrote many poems to old Irish tunes in an "attempt to unite literature and music."[129]

It was in restoring speech to its original importance that the task of the modern theater lay. Yeats loathed the tendency of the traditional theater of the West in which action had become more and more important, speech lost its original simplicity and naturalness, and the stage-setting had become elaborate and artificial, destroying the intimacy of art. In order for the theater to recover the greatness it once enjoyed, speech must be restored to its former position:

> Racine and Shakespeare wrote for a little stage where very little could be done with movement, but they were as we know careful to get a great range of expression out of the voice. Our art, like theirs, without despising movement, must restore the voice to its importance, for all our playwrights, Synge just as much as myself, get their finest effects out of style, out of the expressiveness of speech itself.[130]

In an ideal drama, which means a tragic drama for Yeats, the human form must be obliterated to find itself in the world of a passionate reverie. Yeats saw this happen when Michio Ito danced in a studio, where "he was able, as he rose from the floor, where he had been sitting cross-legged, or as he threw out an arm, to recede from [them] into some more powerful life."[131] This was possible, Yeats maintains, because the dance was

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129. Ibid., p. 841.

130. Ibid., p. 441.

131. Essays and Introductions, p. 224.

performed in a studio where intimacy was successfully kept, and in such an atmosphere alone did he "see (Ito) as the tragic image that has stirred (his) imagination."[132] A celebration of the human form tends, on the one hand, toward elaboration and artificiality and therefore away from intimacy; on the other hand, it tends toward individuation and therefore away from the passionate reverie. This is the tendency that comedy and the modern realistic school of drama have taken.

By finding in the Noh the rhythm in its intensity, therefore, Yeats found a tragic art in the Noh. By suppressing the interest in the human form for the sake of the rhythm to which it moved, the Noh succeeded, Yeats thought, in creating a passionate reverie. It succeeded, in other words, in gaining distance by maintaining intimacy. Yeats missed, however, an important element in Zeami's theory. The Noh, as Zeami stipulated, consisted of two rhythmical parts and three human types, and the formula, of course, is still kept today. The human form, which is represented by three general types, holds a position equal in its importance to the rhythmical parts. The five parts collaborate to bring about the blooming of a flower, the beauty of which is yugen. What Yeats missed, then, is the fact that Zeami aimed at the fusion of the rhythm and the form, a purely monistic-experiential level of art.

Yeats also found that suggestiveness characterized the Noh. It is quite understandable that this element should have appealed to Yeats, for it was his belief that what destroyed intimacy in the drama of the West was elaborate and artificial stage-setting. By pushing the stage to extreme simplicity, leaving only such details as may be suggestive,

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132. Ibid.

the Noh succeeded, Yeats believed, in creating intimacy. Zeami's main interest was not, of course, in simplicity for its own sake, but in the effectiveness of impression. He advised, for instance, the sacrifice of truth to effectiveness, as we have seen in the case of imitating a Chinaman. His concern was rather with an effective creation of the beauty of yugen. Thus the dresses worn by the Noh players are far from being simple or suggestive, but are quite colorful and elaborate. On the whole, however, Yeats came close to Zeami in de-emphasizing the elaborate surface details and substituting in their place "a child's game become noble poetry," that sets before the audience "all those things which we feel and imagine in silence."[133]

The foregoing discussion was meant to show how Yeats applied his aesthetic principle of intimacy to the Noh. The application resulted in a rather half-hearted understanding of Zeami's ideals: some essential elements Yeats seems to have understood, but he missed the important concept upon which the life of the Noh artist and the Noh itself depend, i.e., the concept of the flower. The failure or the omission caused Yeats to take a significant deviation from the Noh in writing his Noh-like dramas, as will be discussed later.

Along with intimacy, Yeats also found distance, the other one of the twin aesthetic principles, attained in the Noh. Art attains distance from the pushing world of business, Yeats believed, by finding its source of life in tradition. Yeats traced the beauty of the Noh to its three-fold origin. From the courtly life of the medieval

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133. Ibid., p. 231.

Japanese, Yeats thought, came the nobility of the love sorrows that one finds in so many Noh dramas. In the Buddhist doctrine he found the source of the intellectual subtlety. And finally, in the Shinto legends and beliefs he found the sources of the narrative proper of the Noh dramas.

Of the three origins what interested Yeats most was the Shinto tradition, which he thought paralleled the Irish folk tradition. The Noh dramatists, Yeats found, were keenly aware of the historical places which were closely associated with the myths and legends of the Shinto religion, and they expressed their emotion to the holy places in much the same manner as the Gaelic-speaking country people of Ireland. With these dramatists Yeats felt a close affinity:

> The men who created this convention were more like ourselves than were the Greeks and Romans, more like us even than are Shakespeare and Corneille.[134]

That Yeats should have felt a closer affinity to the Japanese Noh dramatists than to the classical authors of the West, of course, is no surprising matter in the light of his belief in the archetypal myths as the true sources of all good arts. There is a definite anti-intellectual element in his principle of distance.[135] Yeats put more faith in the popular tradition than in the written. The archetypal beliefs of a given culture are handed down the generations by the common people, in whose life the beliefs are constantly animated and kept alive. The

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134. Ibid., p. 233.

135. Frank Kermode notes an anti-intellectual tendency of Yeats's symbolism in Romantic Image. The idea of the "thinking body" has a parallel in Yeats's general view of an ideal culture--that a culture must have a unity that finds its expression in every piece of art and furniture around a single image as if it has been wrought by a single mind.

archetypal beliefs are not mere abstractions, but are something that has an emotional foundation in the flesh and blood of the people's lives. Any art that attains distance, Yeats believed, appeals to the archetypal beliefs and to the tribal memory of beauty, whereby a lyrical intensity is achieved.

Now, Yeats thought that the Noh dramatists found their material in the popular tradition of Japan. In some sense, Yeats was right, for Zeami de-emphasized the value of originality on the part of the Noh writer and emphasized instead the "authenticity" of the material; and it is true that a lot of materials of the Noh are drawn from folk tradition. However, Zeami's idea of "authenticity" was not restricted to the materials of folk origin. On the contrary, he favored the materials drawn from the written tradition of the classical literature. He advised that the Noh dramatist should draw heavily on the classical literature not only for the narrative but also for poetry and specific passages that had become cliches. He advised especially the use of renga, a genre of poetry which was popular among the aristocrats at Zeami's time. What Zeami aimed to achieve, after all, was not a mysterious art, but an art which had a beauty of universal appeal, drawing upon the material tested and refined by the literary tradition. His interest was neither in the narrative quality of the material per se nor in its philosophical or intellectual subtlety, but in the beauty it could help create. The mysterious and difficult part fell on the actor himself in his art of creating beauty of yugen. Contrary to Zeami's ideal, Yeats's aim was to create "an unpopular theatre and an audience like a secret society where admission is by favour and never

to many,"[136] but an art that could still remind one of its "origin among the common people."[137] The "Noh plays" Yeats wrote were meant to fit the formula. Their materials were drawn from the popular legends and myths, but they were highly sophisticated dramas intended for a small select audience of initiates. One can well imagine how Yeats felt when At the Hawk's Well was performed in a theater in New York without his permission. He wrote to John Quinn:

> Fate has been against me. I meant these 'Noh' plays never to be played in a theatre, and now one has been done without leave; and circumstances have arisen which would make it ungracious to forbid Ito to play The Hawk as he will. I had thought to escape the press, and people digesting their dinners, and to write for my friends.[138]

Thus, Yeats tried to fit the Noh into his dualistic formula of intimacy and distance. He partly succeeded in the attempt, but he failed, at the same time, to note the purely monistic-experiential nature of the Noh which is crystalized in the concept of the flower.

The failure is aggravated by branding the Noh as a tragic art in the Yeatsian sense. The age in which the Noh was perfected interested Yeats unduly and led him to the false conclusion that the spiritual milieu that fostered the Noh sought a heroic discipline and that the Noh was its literary product. The misunderstanding is based on another misunderstanding that the founder of the Noh was "a small daimio or feaudal lord of the ancient capital Nara, a contemporary of Chaucer."[139]

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136. Plays and Controversies, p. 212.

137. Essays and Introductions, p. 223.

138. Letters, p. 652.

139. Essays and Introductions, p. 229.

Yeats believed that the tragic art arose in an age of uncertainty which made the people's minds incline toward some sort of synthesis of conflicting elements, toward some spiritual unity. And a tragic literature could be created by a mind in which there was a real spiritual conflict--like that of Dante. The Japanese warriors of the feudal age, Yeats believed, combined in their minds the masculine worship of power and the feminine sense of beauty. The Noh was a product of such a mind.

> These plays arose in an age of continual war and became a part of the education of soldiers. These soldiers, whose nature had as much of Walter Pater as of Achilles, combined with Buddhist priests and women to elaborate life in a ceremony, the playing of football, the drinking of tea, and all great events of State, becoming a ritual.[140]

Thus, Yeats believed that the Noh was a product of a heroic age, developed and perfected by the artistic warriors whose spiritual thirst was eased by drinking out of the fountain of beauty and archetypal beliefs they uncovered in the art.

Yeats's meeting with the Noh, then, was only a part of the whole cycle in which the gyric movement of the double perspective took place. Yeats found in the Noh what he wanted to find. He interpreted the Noh in a way that might reinforce his own theory. In some respects he came quite close to the ideals set forth by Zeami; and, of course, he assimilated some of the Noh conventions into his dramaturgy, such as dance, chorus (which does not take part in the action), simple and suggestive stage-setting, etc. On the other hand, either intentionally or unintentionally, he overlooked some of the important elements of the Noh and imposed his own ideas on it. The Noh did not cause any change in his

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140. Ibid., p. 235.

double perspective. Furthermore, it gave him very little as the source of his plays. The Noh actually helps us very little in understanding his plays and his dramatic theory. It is more helpful, in my opinion, to look for discrepancies, rather than similarities, that exist between the Noh and Yeats's dramatic theory and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Flower That Never Bloomed

The double perspective with which Yeats viewed the Noh is also carried into his "Noh" plays themselves. In this chapter I shall concentrate on the structural significance that the double perspective has in the plays. The discussion of Yeats's obvious borrowings from the Noh, such as dance, chorus, and musicians will be dispensed with. Also, his obvious deviations from the Noh convention, such as the rhythmical pattern of jo-ha-kyu, the form of dancing (not the joruri dance that Yeats obviously had in mind), and the types of costumes, will be excluded from the present discussion.

Of the five plays written under the Japanese influence, four are modeled after the Noh and one after the Kyogen. Since what Yeats calls "noble plays of Japan" are the Noh plays, we should concentrate our discussion on the relationship between the Noh and his plays; but before we plunge into our main discussion, I might briefly make a comment on the Kyogen. Yeats seems to have known very little about the Kyogen, but it is surprising that the distinction Yeats makes between tragedy and comedy is actually quite similar to the kind of distinction that the Noh and the Kyogen came to assume in the course of time. Although some scholars of Japanese literature argue that the Kyogen and the Noh have independent origins, there is a general agreement that the two genres had a common origin and that the Kyogen developed as a mimetic art of a lower type while the Noh took a more refined and sophisticated line of development.

What distinguishes the Kyogen from the Noh is that its main interest is in the comic, not beauty and elegance.

The earliest authoritative reference to the nature of the Kyogen is found in Zeami's Shudosho (1430), in which Zeami says: "It is generally known that in the Kyogen the actor's performance consists in improvisation or adaptation of an old tale or some interesting story to his comical purposes."[1] The reference is only preamble to what Zeami really wanted to say, i. e., that the Kyogen actor should refrain from vulgarism and aim at a refined type of laughter that is not incompatible with yugen of the Noh. There is no denying that Zeami's warning againt vulgarism contributed to the development of the Kyogen into a refined comedy rather than slapstick, but we can just as easily take the warning as an evidence that the Kyogen was a genre which essentially did not fit the Noh scheme.

The personal element is quite strong in the Kyogen, as Yeats perceived it also in the comedy of the West. Laughter is largely derived from ludicrous speech and behavior of the actors or from the comical situation in which the characters find their interests conflicting. In fact, the Kyogen shows very little interest in non-human elements, natural or supernatural, as a Japanese critic has noted.[2] Characters are clearly defined and in some Kyogen pieces they are fully developed. Action or narrative is not shite-centered, and in many Kyogen pieces the comical effect depends on the dramatization of the conflict between the characters, resulting in the pain of one.

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1. Nose, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 272.

2. Yoshio Araki and Sennojo Shigeyama, Kyogen, Osaka: Sogensha, 1956, p. 123.

Yeats had in mind two antithetical types of poetical drama. One was tragedy and the other was comedy. What distinguished comedy from tragedy was that it was interested mainly in character and the clash of character, from which tragedy always tends away, concentrating instead on lyric feeling. In great tragedies of the past, Yeats believed, character had an insignificant place; while in comedies it received a main emphasis. When character is present in such great dramatic works of Shekespeare, it is defined only in the moments of comedy; and such works are for Yeats tragi-comedy: "Shakespeare is always a writer of tragi-comedy."[3]

Yeats's idea of comedy is clearly based on his dualistic-cognitive perspective. Comedy takes interest in character, which means to Yeats individuation. (It should be remembered that Yeats defined tragedy as "a drowner of dykes that separate man from man.") Individuation means a display of energy, which results in action. The joy of comedy is derived from that action:

> Comedy is joyous because all assumption of a part, of a personal mask, whether of the individualized face of comedy or of the grotesque face of farce, is a display of energy, and all energy is joyous.[4]

And joy has to do with the active will:

> Joy is of the will which labours, which overcomes obstacles, which knows triumph.[5]

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3. Essays and Introductions, p. 240.

4. Autobiographies, p. 471.

5. Ibid.

On the other hand, tragedy has to do with vision, a state of the soul, not with the will or the display of energy:

> The masks of tragedy contain neither character nor personal energy. They are allied to decoration and to the abstract figures of Egyptian temples. Before the mind can look out of their eyes the active will perishes, hence their sorrowful calm. ...The soul knows its changes of state alone, and I think the motives of tragedy are not related to action but to changes of state.[6]

Character and energy, action and will--these are essentially the materials of comedy. In order to take form, they must be put through a process, and that process, when it is complete, gives us a sensation of joy. Yeats, of course, was not so certain about his idea of comedy. He could not separate tragedy from comedy and keep them separate, placing one on the monistic-experiential end and the other on the dualistic-cognitive end of his perspective. In Yeats one end always interfered with and qualified the other. Thus he says at the end of Section XXIV of "Estrangement," which we have been following:

> I feel all this [that the motives of tragedy are related to changes of state] but do not see clearly, for I am hunting truth into its thicket and it is my business to keep close to the impressions of sense, to common daily life. Yet is not ecstasy some fulfilment of the soul in itself, some slow or sudden expansion of it like an overflowing well? Is not this what is meant by beauty?[7]

In Zeami and Yeats, then, we see contrary perspectives. Zeami tried to qualify the dualistic-cognitive art (the Kyogen) with the monistic-experiential scheme (the Noh), while Yeats let his dualistic-cognitive perspective interfere with his monistic-experiential perspective. The interference is evident also in his "Noh" plays. As we shall see

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

presently, character and action, comic materials according to Yeats's dramatic theory, are carried into the plays.

There is no denying that in the four dance plays Yeats practices his own principles of intimacy and distance. The plays have a relatively small number of characters in them and need only a drawing room with no elaborate stage-setting for performance. The simplicity of the plays is "no mere economy" but necessary in order to produce the desired effect, a lyrical feeling. Distance is successfully maintained by removing surface realism and taking the materials not from modern life but from popular myths and legend.

When we compare the plays with the Noh plays of Japan, we cannot but notice a wide gap between them. Yeats's plays are strongly characterized by his dualistic-cognitive perspective, which is revealed in his total disregard of Zeami's concept of flower and in his introduction into the plays of his own tragic concept of conflict and of literary ideas.

It is not certain that Yeats ever knew about Zeami's concept of flower. Even if he did, the concept would have been hardly palatable for Yeats. At any rate, he completely disregarded it in his "Noh" plays. Zeami's concept of flower, as it was previously explained, subsumed two basic concepts, i.e., the concept of yugen and the concept of imitation. The concept of yugen rendered the Noh a singularly aesthetic and non-literary art, which is not dissimilar to the sort of art envisaged in the "aesthetic school" of Arthur Hallam, which Yeats had outgrown long since. The concept of imitation was elevated by Zeami to the level of "no imitation," a purely experiential level of art. This concept would have been more congenial to Yeats, but it would have necessitated a radical qualification of his concept of conflict.

Zeami made it clear that the sole aim of the Noh was to create the beauty of yugen. The narrative element and the literary or philosophical ideas were therefore unimportant or subservient to the supreme aim. Instead the two rhythmical parts of dance and song and the three human forms constituted the vital part of the Noh; and as to speech, rich allusion was valued instead of character-revealing words. Zeami emphasized that extreme care must be taken in the choice of material, keeping in mind the ultimate aim of yugen. He even advised that beautiful words or poetical passages from the classical literature be given to the shite. In Yeats's plays we do not notice such an aesthetic consideration. His plays cannot be said to be richly allusive. Nor do we find the characters to be conducive to the creation of beauty. The speeches, too, are not particularly poetical or lyrical but character-revealing. Poetry is given to the chorus rather than to the characters. Above all, the plays are not free from ideas. At least, Calvary is one example which is based on an idea, as Wilson has pointed out.

Reading Yeats's "Noh" plays, anyone who is familiar with the Japanese Noh will immediately notice Yeats's heavy dependence on speech. The Noh, as I have pointed out, depends heavily on the dance and song for its aesthetic effect. Even the shite's role consists mainly in the rhythmical parts and his speech is reinforced with beautiful words and phrases chosen from the classical sources in order to bring about an aesthetic effect. The Noh aims at a total aesthetic effect of yugen through a fusion of words and music, and of form and rhythmical movement. In Yeats's "Noh" plays words have their own raison d'être by their communicative ability. The difference is clearly seen in the case of Yeats's The Dreaming of the Bones and its model Nishikigi. In Yeats's play the

narrative part, the legend of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla, is done in the speech of the Stranger and the Young Girl, the dead lovers in the mortal form. In Nishikigi, the most prosaic part of the play, the legend of the nishikigi and the hosonuno, is taken out of the context of the play and recounted in what is called the ai-kyogen, a narrative interlude that takes place between the first act and the second. In the main part of the play, the two rhythmical parts of dance and song form the major part of the performance. The arrangement is universally applied to the two-act pieces of the Noh. The communicative and expressive function of words is thus curtailed in favor of their aesthetic quality. The situation is all the worse for the modern audience of the Noh, to whom the language of the Noh is frequently unintelligible due to its archaism and to the distorted pronunciation by the players, so much so that a modern Noh commentator advises to read the Noh text before going to the theater.[8] Yeats would have abhorred such a failure of communication. To him words meant the life of drama. The principle of intimacy and his disbelief in surface realism stemmed from the conviction that words must be restored to their ancient dignity.

The same conviction made Yeats suspicious about formal music. Although it is true that he had a life-long faith in the union of words and music and in fact wrote poems to old Irish tunes in his later life, he consistently maintained, at the same time, a skeptical attitude toward music in which the "natural music (of the words) was altered."[9] In his experiments with speaking verse in collaboration with Florence Farr, he was frustrated by the interference of the rhythm of the music

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8. Mario Yokomichi and Shozo Masuda, Noh to Kyogen (The Noh and the Kyogen) Daidoshoin, 1959, p. 237.

9. Essays and Introductions, p. 14.

with that of the verse. Although he detested "prosaic lifeless intonations" of ordinary speech, he abhorred as much the artificiality of music that killed the naturalness of the speech rhythm. Divining the future of the "new art" of speaking verse, he wrote:

> I am not certain that I shall not see some Order naming itself from the Golden Violet of the Troubadours or the like, and having among its members none but well-taught and well-mannered speakers who will keep the new art from disrepute. They will know how to keep from singing notes and from prosaic lifeless intonations, and they will always understand, however far they push their experiments, that poetry and not music is their object; and they will have by heart, like the Irish File, so many poems and notations that they will never have to bend their heads over the book, to the ruin of dramatic expression and of that wild air the bard had always about him in my boyish imagination.[10]

Music was necessary only in so far as it made poetry live; if it killed the vividness of words, it must not be applied to poetry. By 1906 Yeats's skepticism over pure music became so strong that he would allow only so much music as is inherent in the words:

> Walter Pater says music is the type of all the arts, but somebody else, I forget who, that oratory is their type. You will side with the one or the other according to the nature of your energy, and I in my present mood am all for the man who, with an average audience before him, uses all means of persuasion--stories, laughter, tears, and but so much music as he can discover on the wings of words. I would even avoid the conversation of the lovers of music, who would draw us into the impersonal land of sound and colour, and I would have no one write with a sonata in his memory.[11]

The importance of words he stressed till the end of life. In "An Introduction for My Plays," an essay he wrote for a complete edition of his works which was never produced, he writes about the two dominant desires in his theatrical activities:

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10. Ibid., p. 19.

11. Ibid., pp. 267-68.

> I wanted to get rid of irrelevant movement--the stage must become still that words might keep all their vividness--and I wanted vivid words.[12]

Yet he firmly believed in the fusion of music and poetry, also. Writing in the same essay, he stressed that poetry was meant for the ear alone:

> I wanted all my poetry to be spoken on a stage or sung and, because I did not understand my own instincts, gave half a dozen wrong or secondary reasons; but a month ago I understood my reasons. I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye, and bringing all back to syntax that is for ear alone.[13]

Yeats's attitude to music was thus ambivalent. On the one hand, he believed in a fusion of music and poetry in which words passed imperceptibly into chanting, and on the other hand, he guarded the beauty of his poetry against the spoiling effect of pure music.

The ambivalent attitude is carried into his "Noh" plays. The singing part is given to the chorus, which alternates the singing and the speaking depending on what function it performs. When the chorus is explaining the situation or making an editorial comment, it speaks; and it sings when it expresses the inner feeling of the protagonist or intensifies the lyrical feeling of the situation. Let us see how this is done in At the Hawk's Well.

In At the Hawk's Well two different attitudes to the supernatural are dealt with: One is represented by the Young Man, who heroically challenges the supernatural power in his own terms (and therefore misses it), and the other by the Old Man, who shrinks away unheroically from it. After the song for the unfolding of the cloth, which calls "to the

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12. Ibid., p. 527.

13. Ibid., p. 529.

eye of the mind" the setting and the two characters to be involved in the play, the First Musician sings:

The boughs of the hazel shake,
The sun goes down in the west.

The Second Musician continues the singing:

The heart would be always awake,
The heart would turn to its rest.

Then the First Musician speaks after the rolling up of the cloth:

Night falls;
The mountain-side grows dark;
The withered leaves of the hazel
Half choke the dry bed of the well;
The guardian of the well is sitting
Upon the old grey stone at its side,
Worn out from raking its dry bed,
Worn out from gathering up the leaves.
Her heavy eyes
Know nothing, or but look upon stone.
The wind that blows out of the sea
Turns over the heaped-up leaves at her side;
They rustle and diminish.

The lyric that is sung by the First Musician and the Second Musician emphasizes the lyrical atmosphere of the play which is created around the two states of the mind--the waking state, the heroic mind of the Young Man, and the resting state, the unheroic mind of the Old Man. The lyric describes not the physical circumstance but the inner feelings of the characters. The First Musician's speech, by contract, describes the well, its surrounding and its guardian. The descriptive or narrative element is strong in the speech, while the lyrical element is strong in the song.

The alternating of the singing and the speaking is more skillfully

done in The Dreaming of the Bones. Here is the scene of the journey to the summit of the mountain, where the young rebel seeks refuge from the British troopers and where the dead lovers seek "some one of their race" to forgive their past crime so that "Lip would be pressed on lip":

First Musician (speaking). They passed the shallow well and the flat stone
Fouled by the drinking cattle, the narrow lane
Where mourners for five centuries have carried
Noble or peasant to his burial;
An owl is crying out above their heads.

(Singing)
Why should the heart take fright?
What sets it beating so?
The bitter sweetness of the night
Has made it but a lonely thing.
Red bird of March, begin to crow!
Up with the neck and clap the wing,
Red cock, and crow!

(They go round the stage once. The First Musician speaks.
And now they have climbed through the long grassy field
And passed the ragged thorn-trees and the gap
In the ancient hedge; and the tomb-nested owl
At the foot's level beats with a vague wing.

(Singing)
My head is in a cloud;
I'd let the whole world go;
My rascal heart is proud
Remembering and remembering.
Red bird of March, begin to crow!
Up with the neck and clap the wing,
Red cock, and crow!

(They go round the stage once. The First Musician speaks.
They are among the stones above the ash,
Above the briar and thorn and the scarce grass;
Hidden amid the shadow far below them
The cat-headed bird is crying out.

(Singing)
The dreaming bones cry out
Because the night winds blow
And heaven's a cloudy blot
Calamity can have its fling.
Red bird of March, begin to crow!
Up with the neck and clap the wing,
Red cock, and crow!

The above rather lengthy quotation was made in order to show how the speaking and the singing part are alternated by the Musician. The speaking part is only descriptive or narrative, while the singing is lyrical. Different interpretations have been offered as to the meaning of the song. Wilson treats the three stanzas separately, giving an atmospheric meaning to the first, a political meaning to the second, and the synthesis of the two to the third.[14] Vendler, on the other hand, takes the whole song to be a description of the Young Man's inner feeling.[15] Thus, to Wilson, the Young Man is reminiscing about the unsuccessful but heroic Easter rebellion during the ascent to the summit. To Vendler, the Young Man is dreaming back with the ghosts. Although Wilson's interpretation is ingenious, it seems to me that the context of the play does not require such an interpretation; moreover, there is no reason why the Young Man should recall the Easter rebellion during the ascent. Vendler's reading is forced just as much, for the Young Man is a living person and is in a different gyre from the one the ghosts are in, and therefore cannot have "joined the ranks of the 'rogues' who wander the hills."[16] That is why he does not know what the ghosts are and why they dance before they disappear:

> Why do you dance?
> Why do you gaze, and with so passionate eyes?
> One on the other; and then turn away,
> Covering your eyes, and weave it in a dance?
> Who are you? What are you? you are not natural.

It seems to me that it is false to ascribe the song to any one character in the play. The song and the speech of the Musician are

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14. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography, pp. 237ff.

15. Vendler, op. cit., pp. 190ff.

16. Ibid., p. 191.

about the ascent to the summit, and it is necessary to read them in that context. The speech is a physical description of the ascent and the song is the lyrical intensification of the ascent and a foreboding of its outcome. The question is what the ascent means. At one level it means an ascent from the natural world to the supernatural, the "haunted stones." At another level it is the dead lovers' ascent to consummated love. At still another level it means an ascent of the dead lovers to the primary phase where they try in vain to find their masks through an absolving act of the Young Man. The crowing of a cock is longed for because the ghostly night is feared and also because a new cycle is about to begin, and is yet powerless to do so.

The speech of the Musician aptly describes the ascent by mentioning a cry of an owl in the last line of each paragraph, which indicates the progress of the ascent. At the outset the owl cries above the climbers' heads; then it beats its wing at the foot's level; and finally, after the second stanza of the song, it cries "Hidden amid the shadow far below them." At this time the climbers are almost at the summit.

The song, by contrast, shows no such progress, its aim being a lyrical intensity. The first stanza re-emphasizes the atmospheric fear that the opening chorus set up and the tragic nature (bitter sweetness) of the night. The tragic sense is deepened by the loneliness of the heart which longs for the crowing of a cock, a daybreak. The tragic sense is emphasized because the ascent itself is tragic for the dead lovers, who seek their masks wrongly; that is, the dead lovers seek an absolution from one from whom it is least likely to come, an Easter Rising rebel in flight. Furthermore, the dead lovers' predicament shows that they are out of phase: they seek their masks in the objective

phase; that is, the fulfilment of their desire is subject to the absolution of their past crime by one of their race. Thus, they desire their own masks but their masks are entirely in the hands of another.

The dead lovers are presumably near Phase 15; and when their love is consummated they will be the "creatures of the full" moon that Robartes describes in "The Phases of the Moon."[17] Their fright and loneliness are akin to what Aherne and Robartes ascribe to the creatures of Phase 15:

> Aherne. It must be that the terror in their eyes
> Is memory or foreknowledge of the hour
> When all is fed with light and heaven is bare.
>
> Robartes. When the moon's full those creatures of the full
> Are met on the waste hills by countrymen
> Who shudder and hurry by: body and soul
> Estranged amid the strangeness of themselves,
> Caught up in contemplation, the mind's eye
> Fixed upon images that once were thought;
> For separate, perfect, and immovable
> Images can break the solitude
> Of lovely, satisfied, indifferent eyes.

In the antithetical phase, the creature can "let the whole world go," and proudly seek its own image. In The Dreaming of the Bones, however, the dead lovers cannot seek their own images, because their union requires an absolution by one of their race. They have an antithetical will, but their lot is in the primary phase. When the Young Man declines to forgive their past crime, therefore, they are swept away by the cloud. The cloud of the second and the third stanza means, then, the primary phase in which the moon is out of sight. In that condition the "dreaming bones cry out/ Because the night winds blow/ And heaven's a cloudy blot."

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17. Collected Poems, pp. 160-64. See also A Vision (1937), p. 136, for a description of the creature of Phase 15 seeking to live through antithetical phases as if they had been primary.

Again in Robartes' words:

> Because all dark, like those that are all light,
> They are cast beyond the verge, and in a cloud,
> Crying to one another like the bats; ....

The dead lovers of the play, however, are not dough-like creatures. They are eager to get out of their phase. The refrain at the end of each stanza signifies a longing for a new cycle. It is now common knowledge that for Yeats a cock stood for a herald of a new era. The red cock of March in the song is also expected to perform the same function as that performed by a cock in "Solomon and the Witch." The month of March is especially appropriate, because in the Yeatsian system it is given Phase 15 and is the first month of the year.[18] The refrain means, then, a longing for a new era as well as for a daybreak. At the end of the play, however, it is the cock of the natural world that crows "from far below" telling that "now the night is gone," which means that for the ghost lovers the chance for consummated love is lost and for the Young Man the "sweet wandering snare" has lost its hold on him and he has returned to the natural world.

"Calamity" in the third stanza must be taken as the end of a cycle and the beginning of another. In Yeatsian terms the end of a cycle is always calamitous. A breaking up of an old cycle prepares for a new revelation: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."[19] According to A Vision:

> The loss of control over thought comes towards the end; first a sinking in upon the moral being, then the last surrender, the

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18. A Vision, p. 196.

19. Collected Poems, p. 184.

irrational cry, revelation--the scream of Juno's peacock.[20]

Leda goes through the same process when attacked by Zeus in the form of a swan:

> A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
> Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
> By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
> He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
>
> How can those terrified vague fingers push
> The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
> And how can body, laid in that white rush,
> But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

This violent act engenders the whole panorama of the history of the Trojan war:

> A shudder in the loins engenders there
> The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
> And Agamemnon dead.[21]

Whether the screaming of Juno's peacock occurred for Leda Yeats does not say explicitly, for the poem ends in an ambiguous question in a typically Yeatsian manner.

The foregoing discussion is meant to show how Yeats alternated speech and song in his dance plays and what functions he gave them. The use of speech and song reveals his double perspective of cognition and experience. The fact that he uses song only sparingly and depends largely on speech for communication indicates that he meant not to let himself be completely engulfed in the impersonality of music. "Music is the most impersonal of things," wrote Yeats in "Discoveries"(1906),

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20. A Vision, p. 268.

21. "Leda and the Swan," Collected Poems, pp. 211-212.

"and that is why musicians do not like words."[22] Conversely, Yeats disliked pure music because it killed the personal and intimate effects of words. Music can be beautiful, however, as long as it retains personal quality in its rhythm:

> When, however, the rhythm is more personal than it is in these simple verses, the tune will always be original and personal, alike in the poet and in the reader who has the right ear; and these tunes will now and again have great beauty.[23]

That was as much music as he allowed in his dance plays. He could not accept Zeami's formula of beauty nor the Paterian creed of art. In his adaptation of the Noh to his drama, the cognitive perspective played a considerable role; to the extent that it checked him from being completely infatuated with the East, his plays remained cognitive in nature and Western in essence. On the other hand, it checked him also from attaining his ideal form of art, i.e., "a mysterious art,...doing its work by suggestion, not by direct statement, a complexity of rhythm, colour, gesture, not space-pervading like the intellect but a memory and a prophecy."[24]

The dualistic-cognitive perspective kept Yeats from adapting to his plays still another feature of the Noh. What characterizes the Noh, in contrast to the drama of the West, is the meagerness of the plot; and as much plot as there is, the action is shite-centered, involving no antagonist in conflict with the shite. The waki, secondary character, is not usually involved in the shite's action. He is only an interlocutor

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22. Essays and Introductions, p. 268.

23. Ibid., p. 21.

24. Plays and Controversies, p. 213.

who draws a story out of the shite. In one sense he is the point of view in the play through which the audience sees the action. The absence of conflict between the shite and the waki has led a Noh scholar to the conclusion that the shite is the sole "actor" in the Noh while the waki represents the audience.[25] For Zeami, whose aim of art was to create the beauty of yugen through dance and song, an elaborate plot involving a clash of characters was not necessary. His interest, after all, was not in a study of human actions but in aesthetic experience.

Yeats's deviation from the Noh model is decisively shown in the structure of the dance plays. The dance plays actually do not depend much on dance and song but on words, as I have shown above, and on the plot for their artistic effects. There is a decided dualistic interest on Yeats's part. That is, the tragic ecstasy depends largely on how the action develops and that action consists in conflict. Of course, Yeats's ultimate aim in tragic drama was ecstasy and he would not endorse Aristotle's emphasis on plot as the "soul of tragedy"; however, the Yeatsian tragic ecstasy arises necessarily out of conflict, and Yeats creates action out of that conflict.

In contrast with the shite-centered and conflict-free Noh plays of Japan, Yeats's dance plays are characterized by plurality of characters and conflict-laden plot.[26] What is more, all of Yeats's plays end in a failure to resolve the conflict to which the characters have been subjected, while Japanese Noh plays usually end in a Nirvanic vision or a redemption of the spirit.

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25. Toyoichiro Nogami, Noh: Kenkyu to Hakken (The Noh: Studies and Discoveries), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1930, p. 3.

26. See Hiro Ishibashi, Yeats and the Noh: Types of Japanese Beauty and their Reflection in Yeats's Plays. Yeats Centenary Papers. Anthony Kerrigan, ed. Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1966.

In At the Hawk's Well the main characters are the Old Man and the Young Man, who have come to the remote shore with a common quest, the spring of eternal youth. Both miss what they seek because of their inherent weaknesses, the Old Man being cowardly and the Young Man earthly and heroic. It is difficult to say which is the main character. They have equal weight in terms of their quest and their failure. Perhaps they represent "two moods of the heart," as Vendler suggests.[27] What interests us here, however, is that in actual performance the attention of the audience cannot be focussed on a single character; and, we must follow two lines of action, the Young Man's and the Old Man's. Moreover, a very important piece of performance, dance, is given to the Hawk-Woman, who is the opposing force to both seekers.

The Noh made a complete cycle when At the Hawk's Well, translated with considerable modifications by Mario Yokomichi, was first performed at Somei Noh Theater in Tokyo on October 20, 1949. The comparison between the Japanese version and Yeats's original play shows us essential differences that distinguish Yeats's dance plays from the Noh. In the Japanese version the Old Man becomes the shite (main actor) and the Young Man becomes the waki (interlocutor). The play begins with the Young Man's revelation of his identity followed by a journey to the remote island of the West Sea, where he is met by the Old Man, the wreck of a once youthful traveler, who takes the newcomer to the Hawk's well and tells him of its curse upon himself. The opening of the play, the journey and the conversation are done strictly in accordance with the Noh convention. The conversation is followed by the Hawk-Woman's dance accompanied by the alternated singing by the chorus and the Hawk-Woman

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27. Vendler, op. cit., p. 208.

herself. The dance concludes the first part of the play. In the second part, the ghost of the Old Man appears before the Young Man and tells him that he is what has become of a young traveler who was enchanted by the well until he became a ghost. Then the ghost reveals to the Young Man his agony in a dance and fades into the dark of the mountain like a wind.

At the Hawk's Well, then, suffered considerable changes when it was added to the Noh repertory. The most important change was that the role of the Young Man was reduced from a heroic character to a mere point of view. With the reduction the play lost the heroic thread of the Cuchulain legend and gained the singleness of aesthetic effect that is derived from the Old Man's ghostly affliction turned into a flower. The change was necessary in order to maintain the shite-centeredness of the Noh scheme. And yet a Japanese Noh critic criticizes the Japanese version for putting too much weight on the role of the tsure (Hawk-Woman).[28]

The plurality of characters is a feature that is shared by the other dance plays of Yeats. In The Dreaming of the Bones the young Irish rebel corresponds to the waki of the Noh, but he is more than a point of view through which we see the action of the play; rather, he is a definite character who not only has his own thread of action but also is involved in the action of the protagonists and actually interferes with their interests by denying them a forgiveness that is necessary for a consummation of their love. In The Only Jealousy of Emer there is a similar situation. Emer corresponds to the waki but again she is more than a mere point of view but is actually the main character

28. Akira Maruoka, Gendai no Noh (The Noh Today), Tokyo: Nogaku Shorin, 1954, pp. 14f.

whose distress (jealousy and love for her flirting husband) is dramatized. The play is complicated further by the sub-plot in which Cuchulain's temptation by the Woman of the Sidhe is dramatized. Thus, it is necessary for the audience to follow two threads of events in order to understand the meaning of Emer's problem.

Calvary is a curious work. It is a shite-centered piece that produces a single impression like a Noh play, but the relationship between the shite and other characters is inverted. In a Noh play the shite[29] is the actor in the strict sense of the term: he is the one who acts and the waki is the point of view through which we see him act. In Calvary Christ, who corresponds to the shite, is more like the waki, because through his conversation with other characters--Judas, Lazarus, and the Roman Soldiers--we come to know their feelings. he is the point of view placed in the center of action that whirls about him. He is so central in the play that he is almost a mere point, which we hardly notice without the light thrown upon him by other characters from the periphery. And yet he is more than the waki, for everything happens to him and he is ultimately changed when, at the end of the play, he cries: "My Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In Calvary, too, we must pay attention to both threads--Christ's and the other characters'.

Another feature that distinguishes Yeats's dance plays from the Noh is the conflict-laden plot. There is a definite plot in all dance plays of Yeats, and the plot consists in a development of a spiritual conflict of the main character with the opposing forces, which is left unresolved at the end. No dance plays of Yeats can be appreciated apart from this

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29. The word "shite" literally means in Japanese "the one who does."

plot, for they are not mere dancing and singing nor are they free of ideas. There is a definite exploratory interest in the plays. We are not supposed to be interested in the beauty of the dancing and singing but in the words that express the conflict the characters go through; and that conflict is ultimately to bring us a tragic ecstasy.

At the Hawk's Well is a play which develops the internal conflict of the protagonists whose spiritual quest for eternity is doomed to failure because of their weaknesses. The Old man fails to drink of the well because of his cowardice and his petty, selfish motive. He recoils from the well when the Guardian of the Well starts dancing, and sleeps through the dance; when he awakes he discovers the stones of the well wet but finds no water there. The Young Man's quest is also thwarted by the Guradian of the Well, but unlike the Old Man he heroically goes after her:

> Run where you will,
> Grey bird, you shall be perched upon my wrist.
> Some were called queens and yet have been perched there.

But, of course, the Young Man is really enchanted by the bird and led away from the well as if he was in a trance, dropping his spear. When he returns to the well, the water has already plashed and gone again.

At the Hawk's Well, then, is a dramatization of internal conflicts. When we see the play we make explorations in the minds of the Young Man and the Old Man, which reveal to us not only the spiritual make-up of the two but the nature of their quest as well. The plot--the development of the conflict--is what sustains the play; without it the play would not exist. The exploratory interest is minimized in the Noh and it is an element in which Yeats's dance plays differs from the Noh. When we compare At the Hawk's Well with Yokomichi's Japanese version, we immediately notice the difference. In the Japanese version the Young Man's thread

is entirely eliminated as a narrative element, and the Old Man's enchantment with the well, not his failure, is the theme. The Old Man expresses the agony of his spiritual thraldom in a dance according to the Noh convention, which is to say that the Japanese adaptation follows Zeami's formula for the Noh of the Spirit: "a flower upon a rock." It is difficult to see the Old Man of At the Hawk's Well as a flower of any sort; and Yeats's aim was not to make a flower out of the Old Man either: Yeats's aim was for us to see the conflict itself and its tragic outcome, and not to gain an esthetic experience. That is the note the songs for the unfolding and folding of the cloth stress at the end of the play. The entire lyric is a vision of a disaster in a vain human quest for the supernatural. The first three stanzas, the song for the unfolding of the cloth, point out the tragic nature of the quest and stress a sense of total defeat. The first stanza contrasts the human and the supernatural and hails the return of the "human faces,/Familiar memories." The second stanza expresses a total resignation to the cycle of birth and death of nature:

> Folly alone I cherish,
> I choose it for my share;
> Being but a mouthful of air,
> I am content to perish;
> I am but a mouthful of sweet air.

If the "folly" is accepted in the second stanza, "wisdom" is rejected in the third stanza:

> O lamentable shadows,
> Obscurity of strife!
> I choose a pleasant life
> Among indolent meadows;
> Wisdom must live a bitter life.

An easy life in the natural world is chosen instead of the tragic life

of wisdom which "must live a bitter life." The life of wisdom is a life of conflict, an "obscurity of strife," and is shunned by the weak mind. The song is associated by different critics with the Old Man and with the Young Man alternately, but I think such associations are without sufficient ground and are, in fact, unnecessary. The song decribes lyrically a disaster that fell on the weak mind that attempted to grasp something beyond its power. The Old Man must be strong enough to face the terror of the supernatural in order to experience it; and the Young Man must forsake his earthly heroism. They must have the self that seeks what is most unlike itself, its mask.

The song for the folding of the cloth is a mockery of the weak mind by the supernatural presences. The empty well and the leafless tree, the withered images of eternity (cf. "Among the School Children") which the weak mind can grasp at best, ironically praise the kind of people who would not even attempt the supernatural quest, being content with their own lives:

'The man that I praise,'
Cries out the empty well,
'Lives all his days
Where a hand on the bell
Can call the milch cows
To the comfortable door of his house.
Who but an idiot would praise
Dry stones in a well?'

'The man that I praise,'
Cries out the leafless tree,
'Has married and stays
By an old hearth, and he
On naught has set store
But children and dogs on the floor.
Who but an idiot would praise
A withered tree?'

Notice the humorous and self-mocking tone of the song. The well and the tree are mocking themselves by saying that only an idiot would praise

them, but are, in reality, deriding the weak mind that cannot grasp reality, deriding the weak mind that cannot grasp reality but its shadows.

At the Hawk's Well is, then, a study in the conflict of the mind seeking the supernatural, which ends in failure. It exposes the "vanity of human wishes." It ends on the note it started with:

> What were his life soon done!
> Would he lose by that or win?
> A mother that saw her son
> Doubled over a speckeled shin,
> Cross-grained with ninety years,
> Would cry, 'how little worth
> Were all my hopes and fears
> And the hard pain of his birth!'

The Only Jealousy of Emer is also a study of conflict. As in At the Hawk's Well, two threads of conflict are brought together at the end of the play. One thread is Emer's involving Cuchulain, and the other is the Woman of the Sidhe's also involving Cuchulain; the two threads are brought together to a conclusion, but not a resolution, by uniting Cuchulain to his mistress, Eithne Inguba.

Emer is Cuchulain's wife, who has only "two joyous thoughts," a memory of her happiness in her husband's love and a hope to regain that happiness, and who would not feel jealous of her husband's earthly loves but "valued every slut above her." Her only jealousy is directed toward the supernatural Woman of the Sidhe. She tries hard to retrieve her husband from her supernatural rival but is told by Bricriu, the Woman of the Sidhe's rival spirit from the court of Manannan, that Cuchulain's life can be retrieved only if she renounces all hope of reunion with him. By the supernatural sight given by Bricriu she sees her husband being tempted by the Woman of the Sidhe and about to yield, when she gathers up her courage and renounces her husband's love forever. Thereupon

Cuchulain wakes and throws himself not into Emer's arms but Eithne Inguba's, which means a failure of love on Emer's part.

The Woman of the Sidhe's chance is just as bad as Emer's. She needs Cuchulain's kiss in order to attain a perfection of beauty and personality. But Cuchulain is hard to win because of his earthly ties that linger with him in memory of Emer. Thus when Emer pays her due price for Cuchulain's life, the Woman of the Sidhe has to free him.

The play is about failure of love on both the natural and the supernatural planes. The play begins with the opening lyric for the folding and unfolding of the cloth, which presents Yeats's familiar theme of feminine beauty. The first stanza envisages a woman's beauty as a frail sea-bird, a symbol of earthly beauty which has taken the human soul centuries of intellectual labor to exalt. As Vendler has pointed out, the stanza anticipates "The Statues," but it is also reminiscent of "Adam's Curse," in which three parallel labors--the poet's, the woman's and the lover's--are dealt with in a tone of disillusionment. The "beautiful mild woman" of the poem, presumably Maud Gonne's sister Kathleen, says that "To be born woman is to know--/...That we must labour to be beautiful." Yeats replies: "It's certain there is no fine thing/ Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring."

If the earthly beauty of a woman is like a frail sea-bird exalted by the "sedantary soul/ In toils of measurement," yet frail enough to be dashed to the time-bound earth at any moment, it is also a sea-shell rejected by the sea of Anima Mundi and stranded on the human shore -- a hollow image of eternal beauty. The stanza is again reminiscent of "Adam's Curse," which symbolizes a profound sense of failure of love by a hollow moon and a shell.

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.

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.

An empty sea-shell is used in "Ancestral Houses" as a symbol of the vain glory of humanity that employs art to create an exalted image of beauty which will in time be inherited only by a mouse:

Mere dreams, mere dreams! Yet Homer had not sung
Had he not found it certain beyond dreams
That out of life's own self-delight had sprung
The abounding glittering jet; though now it seems
As if some marvellous empty sea-shell flung
Out of the obscure dark of the rich streams,
And not a fountain, were the symbol which
Shadows the inherited glory of the rich.

Some violent bitter man, some powerful man
Called architect and artist in, that they,
Bitter and violent men, might rear in stone
The sweetness that all longed for night and day,
The gentleness none there had ever known;
But when the master's buried mice can play,
And maybe the great-grandson of that house,
For all its bronze and marble, 's but a mouse.

A sea-shell is also used in "The Sad Shepherd" as a symbol of time's destruction of once meaningful words turned into "inarticulate moan."

The second stanza of the opening lyric of Emer has the sea-shell washed upon the strand by "the vast troubled waters" in a storm that "arose and suddenly fell" during the night. The shell, in other words, was rejected by the sea, that dispenser of time that rejected the shell of the "Ancestral Houses" and destroyed the song of the Sad Shepherd.

And thus it was through an act of violence and degradation that a feminine beauty was brought into existence on earth:

> What death? what discipline?
> What bonds no man could unbind,
> Being imagined within
> The labyrinth of the mind,
> What pursuing or fleeing,
> What wounds, what bloody press,
> Dragged into being
> This loveliness?

The opening lyric, then, points up the two-fold natue of the earthly beauty of a woman. Viewed from the mundane world of time, it is an exalted yet frail sea-bird which was made air-borne with much labor but is liable to fall to the ground. Viewed from the world of eternity, it is a hollow image of eternal beauty that takes an act of violence and degradation foreordained by the great sea of eternity in order to exist in the world of time. Both qualities are rejected by the sea, which cries outside the fisherman's hut where Cuchulain's body is laid:

> White shell, white wing!
> I will not choose for my friend
> A frail, unserviceable thing
> That drifts and dreams, and but knows
> That waters are without end
> And that wind blows.

The earthly beauty of a woman is represented in the play by Emer and Eithne Inguba. They are bound together against the forces of the supernatural. Emer does not feel jealous to Cuchulain's earthly lovers, including Eithne, but feels jealous of the Woman of the Sidhe alone. When Eithne comes into the fisherman's hut to see Cuchulain's body, Emer asks her help to get Cuchulain back to life by saying:

> We're but two women struggling with the sea.

Eithne on her part does not feel inimical to Emer. So, when Emer invites her to sit by Cuchulain's bed, she says hesitantly:

> No, Madam,
> I have too deeply wronged you to sit there.

It is only after Emer's strong urging that she comes near Cuchulain's body and tries to wake his spirit.

Both Emer and Eithne are hollow images of consummate love, for they are both subject to time's devastation. Although they are assigned to Phase 14 by the Woman of the Sidhe, I am not certain that the context of the play requires them to be perfectly phasal.[30] As a matter of fact, they could belong either to Phase 14 or 16, according to A Vision. It seems to me that it is sufficient to have them together as an incarnation of earthly beauty opposed to supernatural beauty. Their earthly and cyclical nature is recognized and confessed in their own words. Emer, her hour passed, lives with only two thoughts-- a memory of Cuchulain's love and a hope to regain it. When Bricriu urges her to renounce Cuchulain's love forever in order to save him from the hands of the Woman of the Sidhe, she replies:

> I have but two joyous thoughts, two things I prize.
> A hope, a memory, and now you claim that hope.

She ultimately renounces that hope in order to retrieve Cuchulain from

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30. Wilson assigns Emer to Phase 22 but Eithne to Phase 14, taking a cue from Fand's reference to Cuchulain's earthly loves and also from the cry of the sea when Eithne enters the fisherman's hut like "an Aphrodite." (Wilson, Yeats's Iconography, p. 109.) However, it should be noted that Fand's reference is not made to one woman but to "many a woman/That did not reach beyond the human" (Collected Plays, p. 191), and that when Eithne enters the fisherman's hut, Emer is also at the scene.

the spirit of the sea, condemning her own love to eternal failure. Eithne Inguba, too, realizes her earthly and cyclical nature when she speaks to Emer of her own status to Cuchulain:

> Women like me, the violent hour passed over,
> Are flung into some corner like old nut-shells.

Thus, for both Emer and Eithne there is no chance of eternal love. Their love is like Sheba's--momentary and cyclical in nature.

In contrast to the opening lyric, the closing lyric concerns itself with the supernatural beauty--the beauty of Phase 15. The stanzas, exceptthe refrain, refer to an inhuman beauty that has almost attained Phase 15. The figure is a cold "statue of solitude," but its heart is strangely beating fast. From such a cold figure, though it may attract the attention of the world,

> He that has loved the best
> May turn...
> His too human breast.

When it attains the zenith of its perfection, the figure becomes a pure image in which thought and body are fused:

> What makes your heart so beat?
> What man is at your side?
> When beauty is complete
> Your own thought will have died
> And danger not be diminished;
> Dimmed at three-quarter light,
> When moon's round is finished
> The stars are out of sight.

This is the attainment of Phase 15, which nullifies the meaning of the figure's craving for love. A Vision has this description:

> Now contemplation and desire, united into one, inhabit a world

> where every beloved image has bodily form, and every bodily form is loved. This love knows nothing of desire, for desire implies effort, and though there is still separation from the loved object, love accepts the separation as necessary to its own existence.[31]

At Phase 15 thought has become an image and that image has a bodily form. Aherne in "The Phases of the Moon" describes the condition, using Dante's analogy:

> All dreams of the soul
> End in a beautiful man's or woman's body.

Yeats envisages thought as a process of the mind toward its object; and all thought necessarily tends toward extinction, because there will be no thought when it finds its object. Thought, thus, implies effort and strife in the antinomical world. When Phase 15 is attained all is resolved into a single incarnation of beauty, which is free from effort and thought:

> As all effort has ceased, all thought has become image, because no thought could exist if it were not carried towards its own extinction.[32]

The attainment of Phase 15 means an end of process. In terms of the closing lyric:

> Your own thought will have died
> And danger not be diminished;

Which is to say that thought is fused into the body. The word "danger" has perplexed Yeatsian critics. Wilson's interpretation is as follows:

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31. A Vision, p. 136.

32. Ibid.

> All beautiful women have the most absolute need for man's companionship; it is their only escape from solitude. But beauty is no protection from loss; even in the fifteenth rebirth, when physical loveliness is 'complete' and all 'thought' dies in self-absorption, the 'danger' of dereliction and loneliness will remain; for man, loving the imperfect as he does, 'cannot bear very much reality,' and will tend to turn away.[33]

Wilson looks upon the loneliness of a being at Phase 15 as a danger, but solitude is a reality to such a being, as Robartes says in "The Phases of the Moon":

> All thought becomes an image and the soul
> Becomes a body: that body and that soul
> Too perfect at the full to lie in a cradle,
> Too lonely for the traffic of the world:
> Body and soul cast out and cast away
> Beyond the visible world.

Furthermore, Wilson's interpretation makes it necessary to read the conjunction "And" in the line "And danger not be diminished" as "But." Vendler, who assigns the stanza from the third line down to Fand speaking to Emer, gives the following interpretation:

> Though human beauty may have temporary victories, in reality these are ephemeral, and the danger of losing Cuchulain to the other world is not diminished by this temporary setback.[34]

This reading would have Emer a victor, which she is not. By renouncing Cuchulain's love Emer lost him forever. Her loss of Cuchulain is not a danger; it is a reality. Again, Vendler's interpretation requires changing the conjunction "And" to "But."

My own reading may be just as forced, but it at least eliminates the

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33. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography, p. 126.

34. Vendler, op. cit., p. 234.

syntactic difficulty. The lines three, four and five belong together syntactically, the third line ("When beauty is complete") being the subordinate clause and the fourth and the fifth ("Your own thought will have died/ And danger not be diminished") being the main clause. Since the fourth line and the fifth are connected by the conjunction "and," the ideas expressed in them should not be contradictory to each other. I take the ideas to refer to Yeats's concept of a Unity of Being as a perfectly proportioned human body in which thought has reached its extinction, finding itself in the "body which the soul will permanently inhabit."[35] What is not diminished at Phase 15 is the importance of the body, which learned men such as mathematicians, theologians and lawyers call "danger."

Although Yeats's dualistic-cognitive perspective tended to leave him to the "toils of the sedantary soul," his monistic-experiential perspective constantly gave him an incentive to free himself from his antimonical thinking. In such moments he would disparage the tendency of abstract thinking that "those learned men who are a terror to children and an ignominious sight in lovers's eyes"[36] are given to. These learned men

> have followed some abstract reverie, which stirs the brain only and needs that only, and have therefore stood before the looking-glass without pleasure and never known those thoughts that shape the lines of the body for beauty or animation, and wake a desire for praise or for display.[37]

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35. A Vision, p. 136.

36. Essays and Introductions, p. 292.

37. Ibid.

The position of the "learned men" is exactly the position taken by the dancer, possibly Iseult Gonne, in "Michael Robartes and the Dancer," in which the dancer is determined to school herself in modern intellectual, abstractionist morality in spite of Michael Robartes' argument that the woman's beauty lies in "uncomposite blessedness." To Robartes' eulogy of the "thinking body" the dancer replies:

> I have heard said
> There is great danger in the body.

To which Robartes makes a comment in a question:

> Did God in portioning wine and bread
> Give man His thought or His mere body?

Robartes' final say in the argument is:

> I have principles to prove me right.
> It follows from this Latin text
> That blest souls are not composite,
> And that all beautiful women may
> Live in uncomposite blessedness,
> And lead us to the like--if they
> Will banish every thought, unless
> The lineaments that please their view
> When the long looking-glass is full,
> Even from the foot-sole think it too.

The danger in the body that the dancer heard about should not be feared; it is actually the eternal form of beauty that every thought dies into. This, it seems to me, is what the word "danger" in the final lyric of Emer means.

The final triplet of the stanza is a repetition of the same idea:

> Dimmed at three-quarter light,
> When moon's round is finished
> The stars are out of sight.

When the moon reaches its fulfilment, that is, Phase 15, all else in the sky disappears, being absorbed into the light of the moon, as thought is absorbed into the body.

The closing lyric of the play means in the last analysis the futility of love between the supernatural and the natural. It takes two to love. In the supernatural realm, when the being reaches its perfect fulfilment its object is absorbed into it. From such a supernatural being, though it may be a form of absolute beauty, the natural man turns "his too human breast," which finds it difficult to take a supernatural flight because of the weight of the memory of the earthly love.

The refrain is a choral comment on the unsuccessful meeting between the supernatural and the natural:

> O bitter reward
> Of many a tragic tomb!
> And we though astonished are dumb
> Or give but a sigh and a word,
> A passing word.

This is a tragic vision of failure--the failure to achieve the Unity of Being at Phase 15. The failure falls on both Cuchulain and the Woman of the Sidhe. Why on the Woman of the Sidhe? In order to understand this, we must carefully read the description of the Woman of the Sidhe and the closing lyric. Although the closing lyric is about the beauty at Phase 15, it does not describe the absolute beauty itself. It describes a being that has nearly achieved a perfection at Phase 15. It pictures the "statue of solitude" as walking in the hut with "Its strange heart beating fast." The last stanza except the refrain repeats the same emphasis on the beating heart, and pictures the figure with a man at its side, an object of love that

has not yet been absorbed into love as it should be at Phase 15. Furthermore, the description of the perfected beauty is done in the future tense, which means that the figure has not reached Phase 15 yet.

The description of the Woman of the Sidhe in the play proper also indicates that the Woman has not quite reached Phase 15. When she appears before Cuchulain she radiates with such beauty that Cuchulain asks:

> Who is it stands before me there
> Shedding such light from limb and hair
> As when the moon, complete at last
> With every labouring crescent past,
> And lonely with extreme light,
> Flings out upon the fifteenth night?

Cuchulain sees her as a being at Phase 15: she is beautiful and lonely like the full moon. The Woman of the Sidhe answers Cuchulain, however:

> Because I long I am not complete.

She needs Cuchulain's love in order to be complete. She then asks Cuchulain why he hides his face from her, and when Cuchulain answers that old memories are the cause, she says:

> Could you that have loved many a woman
> That did not reach beyond the human,
> Lacking a day to be complete,
> Love one that, though her heart can beat,
> Lacks it but by an hour or so?

The Woman of the Sidhe is not quite the being at Phase 15, as Wilson would have us believe; and her thread of action arises out of conflict and ends in failure due to the very imperfection. Wilson, who believes that Hagoromo, a Noh play, influenced Yeats's Emer, sees in the Tennin a prototype of the supernatural beauty:

> Fand's symbol is the 'full moon' of 'perfect fulfilment,' to quote the passage from Hagoromo on which Yeats depends, and to which he will have attached one does not know what mystique. She belongs, consequently, to the fifteenth, supernatural incarnation....[38]

Wilson takes not only the Tennin but also the bird symbolism, the fisherman and the whole sea-side atmosphere to have influenced Yeats's work. That is reading too much of Hagoromo into the play, for a parallelism of characters and their action, not to mention the plot itself, cannot be worked out satisfactorily: In Hagoromo the one who loses and recovers that which belongs to her is the Tennin, supernatural beauty; while in Yeats's play it is Emer who loses and retrieves what belongs to her. In Hagoromo the fisherman, the natural being, is the robber and the Tennin, the supernatural being, is the victim; but actually there is little conflict between them, for the fisherman returns the feather mantle to the Tennin readily and regrets his attempt to keep it. Besides, there is no real reason why the fisherman should hang on to the feather mantle. The rape of the feather mantle is nothing more than a device to draw a dance out of the Tennin. In The Only Jealousy of Emer, however, Fand, the supernatural being, is the usurper and Emer, the natural being, is the victim; and there is a real cause of conflict between them. The conflict is not a device but is the drama itself.

Wilson's interpretation of Yeats's play is based on further misunderstandings of Hagoromo. He takes the Tennin to be the moon-goddess who "dances among her attendant nymphs, for 'there are heavenly nymphs, Amaotome, one for each night of the month'; in the play fifteen of these nymphs wear the white and fifteen the black kimonoes."[39] The play makes

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38. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography, p. 110.

39. Ibid., p. 84.

it clear that the Tennin is one of the thirty Amaotome, heavenly nymphs, each of whom performs a nightly service at the Katsura Palace of the Moon. Even Pound's frequently garbled translation makes this clear:

> Tennin: I also am heaven-born and a maid, Amaotome. Of them there are many.

The dance she dances for the fisherman is not "a dance of pleasure," but is a ritual dance which, according to the Japanese tradition, was taught by a divine being who descended from heaven on the sands of Arito-hama in Suruga, and which was hence adopted by the Imperial Court as a ritual dance.[40] The dance of the full moon was considered to bring about abundance of heaven's grace which was shed universally upon earth like the moon's light.

Wilson also takes the bird-symbolism in Hagoromo as representing the souls of the dead that "cross and recross above the 'waves' of the postmortem state."[41] In Hagoromo the chorus refers to two kinds of birds: One is the supernatural bird of Buddhist heaven, the karyobinga, the other kind includes such birds of nature as geese and plovers. The supernatural bird's voices, which the Tennin is accustomed to hearing, become fainter and fainter, emphasizing a sense of separation that the helpless Tennin feels. The sight of the natural birds that fly homeward with ease and freedom causes her to grieve over her lost freedom. While it may be asking too much of Wilson to have a correct understanding of the Noh play by Pound's inadequate translation, we may, at the same time, rightly say that he has taken some liberties with the meaning of the play in connection with Yeats's Emer. Even if Wilson was right in assuming

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40. Mankichi Wada, Yokyoku Senshaku, Tokyo: Sankaido, 1950, p. 140.
41. Wilson, op. cit., p. 85.

that Yeats was inspired by Hagoromo in writing his Emer, we must say that the poet drastically modified his model to suit his purpose, for he dramatizes the conflict which is all but meaningless in the original and leaves that conflict unresolved, while the Noh ends the play in a dance of the full moon, "a shadow of the moon's fulfilment and truth's eternity and perfection."[42]

I have gone into a lengthy discussion of The Only Jealousy of Emer, because its debt to Hagoromo and other Noh plays is overestimated and its essential difference from the Noh drama is generally overlooked. The case of The Dreaming of the Bones is a little different. It differs more obviously from its Noh model than the previous one. The ending of the play, which leaves the ghosts of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla forever separated, makes a sharp contrast with that of Nishikigi, the model, which redeems the dead lovers from their love sorrows and consummates their love through the service of the journeying priest. Even Wilson has to recognize this,[43] although he ignores its significance. Shotaro Oshima ascribes the difference to the general inferior quality of the Noh literature, and fails to account for Yeats's deviation from the Noh; however, he is aware of the difference.

I discussed the nature of conflict that makes the drama of the dead lovers of The Dreaming of the Bones when I dealt with the function of alternated singing and speaking in the play. Here I shall discuss only the structural significance that the conflict has to the play.

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42. Wada, op. cit., pp. 142f.

43. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography, p. 218.

44. Shotaro Oshima, W. B. Yeats and Japan, Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1965, p. 59.

In Nishikigi the waki, the itinerant priest, is a mere point of view as far as the audience is concerned, and has no antagonistic interest as far as the dead lovers (the shite and the tsure) are concerned. He is simply a functional character, who keeps the show going. In The Dreaming of the Bones, the Young Man (the waki) is definitely involved in the dead lovers' action. He is not a neutral traveling priest of the Noh play, but a person who has a good reason to feel hostile to the dead lovers. The Young Man's and his people's suffering was actually caused by the dead lovers, "that most miserable, most accursed pair/ Who sold their country into slavery."[45] The fulfilment of the dead lovers' wishes thus depends upon the will of the Young Man, one of their race, who ultimately refuses to forgive them. Thus, the plurality of characters and the conflict engendered between them constitute a significant difference between the play and its Noh model.

The conflict, furthermore, is left unresolved at the end of the play and the ghosts of the dead lovers vanish in despair as the dawn descends upon them. The tragic sense is heightened when we realize that the Young Man is not aware of the true identity of the ghosts until they dance a dance of frustrated love, repeating, "Seven hundred years our lips have never met," and finally fade into the cloud that envelops the summit in a moment. As the play ends with the Young Man's

> I had almost yielded and fogiven all—
> Terrible the temptation and the place!

we descend the mountain and hear with the Young Man the cries of red cocks that come from the natural world far below:

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45. Collected Plays, p. 282.

My heart ran wild when it heard
The curlew cry before dawn
And the eddying cat-headed bird;
But now the night is gone.
I have heard from far below
The strong March birds a-crow.
Stretch neck and clap the wing.
Red cocks, and crow!

With whom are we to sympathize? Are we to feel pity and fear for the fate of the dead lovers? Or are we to feel justified in the Young Man's final decision? Yeats's intention is neither. A tragic sense is generated precisely from such a conflict.

The play as a whole, however, presents the history of a conflict and its failure. At one level it represents an ascent to the supernatural and descent to the natural, as the setting (a mountain) appropriately shows. At another level it represents the dead lovers' failure to achieve their Unity of Being. At still another level it represents an unresolved conflict within a nation, an unreconciled quarrel between the ancient and the present generation of the Irish race.

The major point of difference between The Dreaming of the Bones and Nishikigi lies in this. In Nishikigi, as in other Noh plays of spirit, the main interest is in the beauty of the love sorrows of the dead lovers and of their consummated love, a beauty expressed in singing and dancing, not in character-revealing words and action.

In Calvary we finally have a single action in which Christ is the actor. Christ, however, does not do much. He is more like the waki of a Noh play whose function is to officiate the shite's performance. Of course, Christ is not completely a passive observer like the waki in the Noh; on the contrary, he is the observed: everything happens to him and our interest is in what would become of him at the end. The single-

ness of action in Calvary is maintained, therefore, not by the active performer shite but by the passive character of Christ; not the subjectivity of the shite but by the objectivity of Christ, to use Yeatsian terms. The action is forwarded, therefore, by the antagonistic forces surrounding Christ. Once again we can throw much light upon the play by finding discrepancies that exist between the play and the Noh.

There are three major points at which Yeats deviates from the Noh convention. Like the other plays for dancers, the play is characterized by a plurality of characters, although it is free from a plurality of actions. Secondly, the play dramatizes an idea.[46] Thirdly, the drama consists of a conflict that ends in irresolution.

The plurality of characters characterizes Yeats's dance plays and makes it mandatory for the audience to pay attention to all the characters that appear on stage. Calvary is no exception despite the fact that Christ is the main character who never absents himself throughout the play. Unlike the other plays, however, the play is unified by a single action that centers about Christ, who finds himself in conflict with the entire world surrounding him. At the exoteric level, at least, the conflict is not as complex as it is in the other dance plays. However, we must watch every character that comes in the way of Christ and see what sort of conflict develops between them.

The play, however, has a hidden conflict in the character of Christ, which does not reveal itself until the end when Christ cries out: "My

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46. Some philosophical (Buddhist) interpretations of the Noh are offered by Japanese scholars. Mamoru Iwami says that the Noh dramatizes the Buddhist concept of Maya by the shite's performance. See Mamoru Iwami, Nihon Geido to Bukkyo no Kokoro (The Japanese Art and the Heart of Buddhism), Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1958, p. 117.

Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The meaning of this cry is the theme of the play, and it reveals the nature of Christianity as Yeats understood it.

Various interpretations of the meaning of the play are offered by the critics of Yeats's drama. Critics generally agree that the play is about a relationship between the objective and the subjective cycles. They disagree widely, however, in assigning the cycles to the characters. Wilson, who believes, perhaps unfairly to Yeats, that Yeats condemned Christianity as "a dark religion," turns the play into a thesis of comparative religion,[47] giving a superior status to the heron symbolizing the subjective religion and stigmatizing Christ's rule "as something essentially sordid."[48] To Wilson the characters that appear before Christ, insisting on their subjectivity, are the heroic figures who endeavor to keep their solitude and freedom amidst the dark tide of the inferior religion. Vendler disagrees with Wilson, believing that Yeats's sympathies were divided.[49] Vendler's main disagreement with Wilson, however, is that Christ comes from Phase 15 of the primary cycle, thus making the play's theme "interaction of objective and subjective life, the double interlocking gyres."[50] Regrettably, however, Vendler does not satisfactorily relate this underlying pattern to the actual events that take place in the play. Nathan follows Wilson and Vendler in assigning Christ to the objective cycle and the other characters to the subjective.

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47. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography, p. 167.

48. Ibid., p. 191.

49. Vendler, op. cit., p. 174.

50. Ibid., p. 173.

He differs from his predecessors, however, in seeing dual nature in Christ: "though His divine nature is objective, His human nature, derived from the dying subjective cycle, experiences the agony of man out of phase and deprived of the possibility--in His isolated state--of completion."[51] This seems to be an arbitrary view unwarranted by the text.[52] Peter Ure presents a unique view, assigning Christ to the same cycle as the other characters. Making much of the closing lyric, Ure argues that the conflict occurs between Christ and the other characters because the subjective God tries to make the subjective men into his objects:

> God had not appeared to them, but this God is like them. ...The stillness and loneliness of Christ are enhanced, and the songs are tied into the main antithesis of the play. As Yeats would have put it when writing in another mode, it is the subjective God who calls upon men to be his objects, who pours his own spirit into them.[53]

Ure's view is interesting, but it does not explain Christ's isolation from God.

I have briefly discussed the view expressed by the four critics mentioned above to show how diverse interpretations of the play have been offered. My own interpretation is indebted to all four and others, but differs from any of them in looking upon the play not as a thesis on impersonal cycles but as a dramatization of Christ's spiritual conflict and the failure to resolve it.

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51. Nathan, op. cit., p. 204.

52. Nathan's authority here is a passage in A Vision, which I shall later quote. In the passage Yeats says that the man in Christ was antithetical like his age; but Calvary does not dramatize Christ the antithetical man but the antithetical Son.

53. Peter Ure, Yeats the Playwright, a Commentary on Character and Design in the Major Plays, New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc, 1963, p. 119.

Christ's conflict and failure to resolve it is deeply rooted in his dual nature as the Son of God. As the Savior, Christ is subjective in nature; and as the instrument of God, he is objective in nature. This dual nature of Christ caused Yeats to deviate cosiderably from the Noh convention. Christ, as I have already pointed out, holds a curious position as a character in that he does very little to forward the action and yet is the leading character whose progress is the drama itself. He has the characteristics of both the shite and the waki of the Noh: He not only acts out his fate like the shite of the Noh, though passively, but also creates a dramatic situation for the other characters to act out their lives. Thus, in Yeatsian terms, he is both subjective and objective. This dual nature of Christ on the structural level of the play is closely related with its thematic level.

As Peter Ure and Leonard E. Nathan after him have pointed out,[54] the play is about "a dreaming back" of Christ's passion. This is made clear by the chorus immediately after the opening lyric is sung:

> The road to Calvary, and I beside it
> Upon an ancient stone. Good Friday's come,
> The day whereon Christ dreams His passion through.

In "the dreaming back" of his passion Christ is caught between his two opposing natures and falls into what Yeats in A Vision calls the Victimage for the Ghostly Self.[55]

The opening lyric stresses the note of conflict, indicating that

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54. Ure, op. cit., p. 117. Nathan, op. cit., p. 202.

55. A Vision, p. 239.

daemonic relationship between the subjective white heron[56] and God is impossible: "God has not died for the white heron." They cannot die each other's life. And they cannot live each other's death either; hence, the re-emphasis on the note of conflict in the closing lyric: "God has not appeared to the birds." Peter Ure is right about God being subjective, for He chooses himself and Christ. When a subjective creature is confronted with the subjective God, there can be only an irreconcilable conflict. Christ, however, has a dual nature. As an instrument of God, raising Lazarus from the dead and subduing Judas, he is subjective, but as God's choice he is completely objective in nature, willing nothing but God's will. This dual nature Christ makes clear in his exchange of words with Lazarus. When Lazarus complains that Christ is traveling to death he is denied, Christ says:

> But I have conquered death,
> And all the dead shall be raised up again.

But when Lazarus complains that his freedom and solitude (the subjective condition) are invaded, Christ says: "I do my father's will." In defining humanity, Christ is as subjective as God himself, but in so doing he is not willing of himself but of God. His words to Judas aptly reveal his dual nature: "My Father put all men into my hands."

The dual nature of Christ has also the support of A Vision, in which Christ is said to have in him pity and love. Love is objective in nature and belongs to contemplation, while pity is subjective in nature and belongs to action. It was the latter, pity, in Christ that created Christendom:

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56. For a discussion of the bird-symbolism of the play, see Wilson's Yeats's Iconography, Chapter V and Yeats's own explanation in his notes to the play in Plays and Controversies, p. 459.

> We say of Him because His sacrifice was voluntary that He was love itself, and yet that part of Him which made Christendom was not love but pity, and not pity for intellectual despair, though the man in Him, being antithetical like His age, knew it in the Garden, but primary pity, that for the common lot, man's death, seeing that He raised Lazarus, sickness, seeing that He healed many, sin, seeing that He died.
>
> Love is created and preserved by intellectual analysis, for we love only that which is unique, and it belongs to contemplation, not to action, for we would not change that which we love.[57]

What we see in Calvary is this pity for the primary (objective) creatures in open conflict with such subjective creatures as Lazarus and Judas. His sacrifice, of course, was love itself, because it meant for him to be chosen by God, to become an instrument of God. However, that love is not complete unless his pity has found its object; that is, unless God's will is fulfilled through him. Thus when he is repelled by Lazarus and Judas and is finally shown the meaning of the repulsion by the Roman Soldiers who dance a dance of God's chance, not choice, Christ cries out in despair: "My Father why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Christ's predicament is what Yeats calls the Victimage for the Ghostly Self. When the bond between an incarnate Daimon and a Spirit of the Thirteenth Cone is severed, the incarnate Daimon turns his natural craving into the supernatural; and this supernatural craving is a craving for a supernatural guide:

> In the whirling of the gyres the incarnate Daimon is starved in its turn, but starved not of natural experience, but of supernatural; for compelled to take the place of the Spirit, it transforms its natural craving--Eli! Eli! Lama Sabacthani!?--and this state is called Victimage for the Ghostly Self, and is described as the sole means for acquiring a supernatural guide.[58]

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57. A Vision, p. 275.

58. A Vision, p. 239.

In the relationship between a Daimon and a Daimon one is tyrant and the other is victim, living each other's death and dying each other's life: when one is subjective the other is objective. When some act prevents the union of two incarnate Daimons, the state is called Victimage for the Dead. Now, this Victimage sometimes coincides with Victimage for the Ghostly Self:

> Sometimes, however, Victimage for the Ghostly Self and Victimage for the Dead coincide and produce lives tortured throughout by spirituality and passion.[59]

Christ's passion comes from this coincidence of Victimages. The subjective Christ is starved because he could not "save" the world, which is totally subjective and seeks only solitude and freedom. He therefore turns to God, transforming his natural craving into a supernatural craving for divine guidance. In other words, when God's will does not seem to work through him, Christ feels abandoned by God. The loss of subjectivity toward the world means a loss of objectivity toward God. Such is Christ's problem, and it arises from his dual nature of subjectivity and objectivity.

This explains why Christ is such a curious character in the play. He does very little to forward the action and yet he is the main character around whom events take place and without whom events would never take place. He is the observed throughout the play and yet he is the actor in the true sense of the term, for he alone shows a significant change: from serene confidence to agonizing despair. He is the window through which we get a glimpse of the world of God's Chance and yet it is his fate in which we are interested. In Christ, in other words, Yeats com-

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59. Ibid., p. 240.

bined the shite and the waki of the Noh. He gave Christ the subjectivity of the shite and the objectivity of the waki. The polarity, however, is deliberately left unresolved. The subjectivity in Christ fails to find its mask and the objectivity in him feels abandoned by its supernatural Self. This is the idea that Yeats dramatizes in Calvary.

In all four plays for dancers Yeats's theme is a failure of experience. Yeats sees the world in eternal conflict and leaves it at that. The main interest of the plays lies in a study of action, human or supernatural, that takes place in the antinomical processes of the universe. The plays present singularly dualistic-cognitive perspective, though their monistic-experiential aspirations are quite apparent on both the thematic and the dramaturgic levels. The flower that Zeami fostered in the Noh never bloomed in Yeats, though the roots, one might say, were secured.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

I

Yeats's career is characterized by a vacillation between the saint and the artist. Throughout his life he pursued these two objectives through religious practice, various types of psychic research and experiment, and creative activities. In pursuit of sainthood, Yeats ardently searched for a transcendental world and endeavored to know that world immediately and concretely; in his artistic pursuit, he was keenly aware of the phenomenal world, from which he derived material and inspiration for his creative activities.

Yeats's life, however, was not a war fought between the saint and the artist. There certainly was a conflict between the saint and the artist; however, the matter was not so simple as to be called a war in which one must emerge as the victor. The conflict was rather a complementary sort, in which "one lived the other's death and died the other's life," to use the Heraclitian expression that Yeats borrowed from the ancient Greek philosopher. Neither the saint nor the artist could ultimately claim Yeats's soul, for Yeats was both and neither.

At the base of Yeats's vacillation there was an insoluble double perspective of the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive. The double perspective operated in Yeats's mind throughout his life, though, at times, one pole was stronger than the other. When the monistic-experiential perspective was stronger, Yeats aspired to sainthood. He was dominated by this perspective during his theosophist days, his Cabalistic infatuation, and his Hindu discipleship. However,

when the dualistic-cognitive perspective was predominant, he concentrated on his career as an artist. The Apollonic impulse (the term he borrowed from Neitzsche) set in when this perspective had a hold of Yeats's imagination. The first major change came about 1903, when Ideas of Good and Evil was published. Yeats announces this change explicitly in his letters to John Quinn and George Russel (AE).

The double perspective, however, finds its microcosm in each of Yeats's pursuit. Yeats the saint was not free from the pull of the dualistic-cognitive pole, and Yeats the artist always oriented his work in the direction that his monistic-experiential pole urged him to. Thus, we find his visionary documents characterized by intellectual abstraction and the dualistic view of reality. A Vision is such a document. On the other hand, his creative theory and work are characterized by saintly aspirations and the monistic view of art. Thus his tragic theory and dramatic work are characteristically monistic in spirit, though always at their base is the dualistic-cognitive regard for the phenomenal world.

Thus, Yeats's dualism, which has been the subject of much discussion among the critics of Yeats, should not be considered, in a simple two-dimensional fashion, as a war between two conflicting forces, such as: the self and the soul, as Bowra sees them; Easternism and Westernism, as Engelberg divides them; the mystic and the non-mystic, as Vendler would divide. Yeats's dualism had a more complex mechanism than all these dichotomies. Generally speaking, as I have already pointed out, his interest was divided into that of the saint and that of the artist. In each interest, however, there was a polarity of perspectives. Whichever interest he pursued, the polarized perspectives interestingly

modified and complemented each other.

II

Yeats's relationship with the East has attracted the attention of the critics of Yeats. The subject can be an interesting case study of the East-West relationship; however, any such study must take into consideration the complex nature of Yeats's thought. Yeats's meeting with the East should not be considered as an either-or case. He was not totally converted, nor did he flatly reject the East. He reacted to the East rather interestingly; he revealed his basic perspective which was characterized by a polarity of the monistic-experiential and the dualistic-cognitive. This study has focussed on the way Yeats reacted to the East, which, as far as the poet was concerned, was largely represented by Hindu philosophy and the Noh drama of Japan. In the study I have pointed out that Yeats reacted to the East with his double perspective, accepting so much of it as the perspective permitted him to. On the whole, however, I have found the dualistic-cognitive perspective the stronger of the two, though Yeats himself did try to be free from its hold.

Schooling himself in the Eastern traditions, Yeats's main interest rested in the soul's emancipation, with which Hindu thought was concerned, and in the archetypal patterns and tragic vision of the Japanese Noh drama as he saw it. Both traditions had something that would satisfy Yeats's monistic-experiential aspirations. Hindu thought offered him the concept of non-dualistic Brahman, which is comparable to his Thirteenth Sphere, while the Japanese Noh offered him a concrete

form of art which was characterized by the principles of intimacy and distance, the two principles that he thought were the measure of art's greatness.

Yeats, however, could not go all the way with the East. The dualistic-cognitive perspective modified his monistic-experiential interest in the Eastern traditions. Consequently, he missed what is most strongly emphasized in the Eastern school of thought: the experience that constitutes an emancipation from the dualistic world of names and forms. Yeats's failure to attain that experience is rooted in his basic mode of thinking.

Like the being in his own system who finds itself between the Will and the Mask, between the warring forces of the Will and the Creative Mind, Yeats himself finds his place between the wisdoms of definition and non-definition. The mask he seeks is the wisdom of non-definition, but his Creative Mind is always aware of the Body of Fate, which perpetually destroys this attainment, "thereby leaving the Will to its own 'dispersal'."[1] Being at Phase Seventeen, Yeats cannot submerge the Body of Fate into the Mask, nor the Creative Mind into the Will, though his momentary vision corresponds to the image of "Shelley's Venus Urania, Dante's Beatrice, or even the Great Yellow Rose of Paradiso."[2]

The antinomy also shows itself in the way Yeats sees things. Yeats's approach is fundamentally rationalistic and cognitive, although his ideal is the experience of unity. Central in his thought is his awareness of conflict in human experience, and the world of unity and

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1. A Vision (1937), p. 142.

2. Ibid., p. 141.

eternity is enclosed in the phaseless Thirteenth Sphere, which defies human understanding. While he does not deny the importance of the world of unity, Yeats insists that one should make what he can out of the world of duality:

> The soul cannot have much knowledge till it has shaken off the habit of time and of place, but till that hour must fix its attention upon what is near, thinking of objects one after another as we run the eye or the finger over them.[3]

The world of objects is what the Eastern sages discard as mere shadows of reality.

In a sense Yeats is caught in his own trap. He has made an elaborate system of the universe, realizing, when the labor was over, that his true business was to get out of the system; but it is too late, for the system entwines him like a living snake.

Yeats struggles to free himself from the antinomies of the world, and there are moments when he seems to resolve the conflict. In the poem called "Demon and the Beast," for instance, we have:

> For certain minutes at the least
> That crafty demon and that loud beast
> That plague me day and night
> Ran out of my sight;
> Though I had long perned in the gyre,
> Between my hatred and desire,
> I saw my freedom won
> And all laugh in the sun.

Though briefly, he enjoys the happiness of liberation, being out of the tension between the subjective and the objective. The freedom is presumably won in the primary phase, for "all laugh in the sun."

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3. Mythologies, p. 358.

Then the poet grows warm and intimate toward life around him:

> But soon a tear-drop started up,
> For aimless joy had made me stop
> Beside the little lake
> To which a white gull take
> A bit of bread thrown up into the air;
> Now gyring down and perning there
> He splashed where an absurd
> Portly green-pated bird
> Shook off the water from his back;
> Being no more demoniac
> A stupid happy creature
> Could rouse my whole nature.

Yet the happiness is not without this realization:

> Yet I am certain as can be
> That every natural victory
> Belongs to beast or demon
> That never yet had freeman
> Right mastery of natural things,

and he only wishes that he

> may find out a way
> To make it linger half a day.

Yeats, then, being trapped in his own system of antinomies, violently tries to escape it, but he cannot quite escape the system, nor this world itself. As he acknowledges at the end of A Vision (1937), Yeats estranged himself from the final enlightenment by resorting to intellection and symbolism in his approach to the ultimate reality. His intellect labored for years but was not rewarded with a final vision, and he laments this fact. He did not lack "the ideas of India" or of the final emancipation; he was, no doubt, given those

ideas by his instructors,[4] but he lacked a personal experience. Yeats was never able to lift himself up to the realm where the sages of India, Christian mystics, or Existentialists[5] were able to ascend. Toward the end of his life Yeats still sees things in conflict. Indeed he seems to affirm the conflict more strongly than ever. In one of his last essays we find:

> Opposites are everywhere face to face, dying each other's life, living each other's death. When a man loves a girl it should be because her face and character offer what he lacks, the more profound his nature the more should he realise his lack and the greater be the difference. It is as though he wanted to take his own death into his arms and beget a stronger life upon that death.[6]

Until death Yeats seems to have been unable to see life in any way other than in conflict. The idea of conflict is repeated in his letter to Ethel Mannin, dated about three months before his death:

> To me all things are made of the conflict of two states of consciousness, beings or persons which die each other's life,

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4. Compare his poem, "Gratitude to the Unkown Instructors":

> What they undertook to do
> They brought to pass;
> All things hang like a drop of dew
> Upon a blade of grass

with a passage from D. T. Suzuki's book: "When you have satori you are able to reveal a palatial mansion made of precious stones on a single blade of grass...." (Essays in Zen Buddhism, London: Rider & Co., 1950, p. 34.)

5. Virginia Moore notes similarities between Yeats and the Existentialist thinkers; it seems to me, however, that the important Existentialist concept of the "Absolute Choice," or "projecting into Nothingness," is practically absent from Yeats's system. See Virginia Moore, The Unicorn, William Butler Yeats's Search for Reality, New York: Macmillan, 1954, p. 435.

6. On the Boiler, Dublin: The Cuala Press, 1938, pp. 22f.

> live each other's death. That is true of life and death themselves. Two cones (or whirls), the apex of each in the other's base.[7]

Of course, Yeats tried to resolve the antinomy, but his mind was constantly made aware of it. He could not resolve it within himslef. Instead, he came to accept the antinomy in a sort of tragic spirit:

> Cast a cold eye
> On life, on death.
> Horseman, pass by!

Yeats, in the last analysis, is a failure as a visionary poet; but as Hazard Adams says, his true greatness lies in that he turned his failure into creative energy.

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7. Letters, pp. 917f.

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