

## TEZA DE DOCTORAT

MYTH, SYMBOLISM, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY IN W. B. YEATS'S SELECT POETRY

(„Mit, simbolism, istorie și filozofie în poeme alese de W.B. Yeats”)

elaborată de drd. THABIT SHIHAB AHMED AHMED

Conducător științific prof.univ.dr. Emil Sîrbulescu

(REZUMAT)

*The world through the eyes of the poet: symbols in context*

The years between the mid-nineteenth century and the First World War were a period of enormous social and philosophical turmoil in Western Europe, and the literary movements that emerged reflected the unique ideological challenges of this rapidly changing society. The literary theories of the later nineteenth century were reactions against both the Enlightenment of the previous century and the subsequent period of Romanticism. Literary realism confirmed the realistic images of the world and the ordinary man and rejected romantic idealism and misrepresentation of the world. The First World War, an unprecedented event in the history of mankind, had a great influence on the philosophies and works of many writers. Europe was seen at the heart of civilization, and England was one of the world's leading powers. With the emergence of civilization at its highest point, the resulting global war had a devastating effect, bringing Europe to its knees physically, economically and psychologically. The total destruction of the First World War undermined Europe's sense of power and identity, and the assurance of a rational world of reasonable beings was completely lost. These complex philosophical developments are explored in the literary works of many famous authors such as Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy and William Butler Yeats. Yeats's period was a break with the past, a period of confusion over current and pessimistic predictions of the future. In his poetry, Yeats examines the spiritual state of Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the wake of Enlightenment and romantic periods, attempts to define the subsequent philosophical crisis, and suggests his outlook for the future.

\*\*\*\*\*

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was born in Dublin in an Irish Protestant family with a prominent social status. Yeats widely read Spencer, William Blake, P.B. Shelley, John Keats, William Morris and Rossetti. In addition to these creative authors, He was deeply immersed in the study of the philosophies of Plato, Plotinus, Hegel, Croce and Whitehead. Another powerful influence on Yeats, especially in his forms of mysticism and esotericism, is John O'Leary, the famous Irish national leader. He explained the independent identity of Ireland and its right to be a free state. In 1887, in London, Yeats met with Edward Ellis, and together they edited the prophetic books of William Blake. He was also acquainted with the writings of Mallarmé and the symbolist movement of France, which had a great influence on his poetry. Therefore, his personal experiences and intuition enabled him to develop his own philosophy on human life, history, religion and other important issues concerning man and the universe. He did not support the ideology promoted by the Socialists.

One of the most influential presences in Yeats's poetry is Maud Gonne, the beautiful lady and prominent Irish personality. His insane love for her was not reciprocated. Her marriage with another Irish national leader brought the torment of her life. The interactions with Maud Gonne helped Yeats shape his philosophy on women's psyche, beauty and nature. His poems, "Adam's Curse", "A Prayer to my Daughter" and "No Second Troy" reflect his thoughts in this regard.

For Yeats, history is cyclic repetition. In his volume, *A Vision*, he refers to his own doctrine of history. The unique personal system of his belief involves the doctrine of reincarnation where all kinds of humanity are set on a continuous cycle and continuous movement. He called it "the Great Wheel", with twenty-eight phases corresponding to the phases of the moon. His philosophy of history is revealed in poems such as "The Second Coming", "Leda and Swan", "A Vision" and many other poems. Yeats has a great contribution to glorifying Irish national history and legends, and to the history of religion.

When Yates was in high school in Dublin, he learned Latin and discovered the Byzantium Empire, its art and architecture. Byzantium is the ancient name of the city of Constantinople. Yeats loved and respected the artistic richness of the city. For him it was a holy city, which symbolizes European civilization and spiritual philosophy. His poem "Sailing to Byzantium" is only a journey in search of pure spirituality; it deals with the problem of aging. Yeats considered Byzantium as a purgatory. In old age, a man must abandon physical pleasures in the world and

aim at spiritual salvation. He says that if an old man with a spirit washes his hands and sings loudly, this life is worth living. Yeats suggests that the old man should flee to Byzantium, a symbol of purity, art and spirituality, where he must act with a sense of freeing his spirit from the sensual world.

Yeats's participation in the Irish political life added to his interest in Irish mythology and folklore, suppressed through the doctrine of the Church and the British control over the school system. Yeats used his poetry as a tool to re-educate the Irish population about their heritage and as a strategy to develop Irish nationalism. He recounted full folk tales in epic poems and plays, such as "The Wanderings of Oisín" (1889) and "The Death of Cúchulainn" (1939). Other poems deal with images and themes taken out of folklore. Yeats instilled in his poetry a rich sense of Irish culture. Even poems that do not deal explicitly with people of legend retain strong features of original Irish culture. Yeats often borrowed patterns of traditional Irish mythology and folklore.

The use of symbols has always been a hallmark of Yeats's poetry. The gyre, a circular or conical shape, appears frequently in his poems and was developed as part of the philosophical system outlined in his volume *A Vision* (1925). He chose the image of interlocking gyres – visually represented as two intersecting conical spirals – to symbolize his philosophical belief that all things could be described in terms of cycles and patterns. With the image of the gyre, Yeats created an element of reference in his poetry that supported his full philosophy of history and spirituality.

Swans are a common symbol in poetry, often used to depict idealized nature. Yeats employs this convention in "The Wild Swans at Coole" (1919), in which the regal birds represent an unchanging, flawless ideal. In "Leda and the Swan," Yeats rewrites the Greek myth of Zeus and Leda to comment on fate and historical inevitability: Zeus disguises himself as a swan to rape the unsuspecting Leda. In this poem, the bird is fearsome and destructive, and it possesses a divine power that violates Leda and initiates the dire consequences of war and devastation depicted in the final lines. Even though Yeats clearly states that the swan is the god Zeus, he also emphasizes the physicality of the swan: the beating wings, the dark webbed feet, the long neck and beak. Through this description of its physical characteristics, the swan becomes a violent divine force. By rendering a well-known poetic symbol as violent and terrifying rather than

idealized and beautiful, Yeats manipulates poetic conventions, an act of literary modernism, and adds to the power of the poem. "Wild Swans at Coole" is a poem taken from the volume with the same title, published in 1919. In this poem, Yeats considers the problems of exhaustion of his imaginative power as he is becoming old. He thinks that old age is a curse, which paralyses his youthful energy and imaginative skills. The pains and pangs of old age make him restless. He refers to the swans which tirelessly swim across the pond. For about 19 years, he has watched them. They are invulnerable to ravages of time. Yeats feels that these birds may grow old like himself; they may even die physically but the pattern of life they established will survive forever. The swans produce an idea of immortality.

Yeats employs the figure of a great beast – a horrific, violent animal – to embody difficult abstract concepts. The great beast as a symbol comes from Christian iconography, in which it represents evil and darkness. In "The Second Coming", the great beast emerges from the Spiritus Mundi, or soul of the universe, to function as the primary image of destruction in the poem. Yeats describes the onset of apocalyptic events in which the "blood-dimmed tide is loosed" and the "ceremony of innocence is drowned" as the world enters a new age and falls apart as a result of the widening of the historical gyres. The speaker predicts the arrival of the second coming, and this prediction summons a "vast image" of a frightening monster pulled from the collective consciousness of the world. Yeats modifies the well-known image of the sphinx to embody the poem's vision of the climactic coming. By rendering the terrifying prospect of disruption and change into an easily imagined horrifying monster, Yeats makes an abstract fear become tangible and real. The great beast slouches toward Bethlehem to be born, where it will evolve into a second Christ (or anti-Christ) figure for the dark new age. In this way, Yeats uses distinct, concrete imagery to symbolize complex ideas about the state of the modern world.

It is assumed that the philosophy propounded by W.B. Yeats one hundred years ago has proven right in the light of the socio-political developments that have taken place throughout the world. His vision of history and cyclical sweeps of history and his prophesy about the ensuing troubled years have come true. In "The Second Coming", the title is borrowed from the Christian belief that the re-incarnation of Christ will take place before the end of the world. In this poem, Yeats expresses the sense of disintegration of civilization. No civilization is perfect in all respects. The demerits of a civilization ultimately give way to another civilization to dominate. The incomplete

and ever widening circle of the gyre explains this cyclical view of the history. These sweeping circles will take the shape of the second coming of the Christ to restore the peace and order that was established when the Christ came first. The widening gyre may also take the ugly shape of a tyrannous monster.

Yeats uses the imagery of the falcon, a bird, flying upwards. The bird loses its contact with the falconer. This explains that the system of life is moving away from the value system that inspires the life of the beginning. Critics suggest that Yeats means that man is moving away from his creator and the result is obvious. "Things fall apart, and mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." This means disorder will prevail and chaos will grow in the world. While writing the poem, he must have had in mind the turmoil of Russia and the rebellion in Ireland, the subversive role of England and the bloodshed when the Czarist regime was overthrown from Russia. All these are referred to in the line "The blood dimmed tide is loosed."

The poet is not sure as to what will happen in the future. There might be a second coming of Christ which will restore order and peace in the universe or it may be otherwise. Yeats is afraid of the emergence of "Spiritus Mundi." This stone image troubles his mind. Perhaps Yeats refers to the sphinx of Egypt. The free movement of his cruel monster will bring horror in the world. During the twenty centuries of the Christian civilization the beast has been sleeping, but now it is about to come to life. So the new era will be monstrous with unlimited inhuman power. In the final analysis, the poem envisions the destruction of the world at the moral, spiritual levels.

A historical overview of humanity, either in terms of family life, and woman's role as mother, or in terms of world-peace, shows quite disturbing facts, and an alarming situation. Woman has lost her traditional role, family life has broken down, marriage has become difficult, the rate of divorce has gone up, more people live in relations of co-habitation, while homosexuality, gay-lesbianism have become the order of the day. In connection with peace, it is needless to say that the past one hundred years have witnessed unexplainable human suffering due to wars, violence like skirmishes, clashes, rebellions, subjugations and subversions. Looking back at the events of the last one hundred years, we notice that the world has experienced turbulent periods and turmoil in the lives of nations; for instance, World War II, the cold war, the Indochina and Indo-Pakistani wars, the Arab-Israel tussle, the American aggression on Iraq and the Arab revolution

in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and the present turmoil in Syria. Therefore, we can safely argue that Yeats's vision has turned true.

### *Objectives*

In the light of these facts, we have proposed a number of research objectives. It was our intention to investigate the new meanings of the symbols and images employed by the poet, in postmodern and postcolonial terms. Regarding Yeats's life-long preoccupation with myth, we attempted to review and negotiate the meanings of myth employed by Yeats in his poetry in the backdrop of modern globalized world scenario. History and man's role in history has been one of Yeats's major concerns: a major objective of this research was to investigate the truth in the light of the concept of the history as envisioned by Yeats in the lives of people throughout the world. Considering Yeats's philosophical turn of mind, we proposed to scrutinize the philosophy propounded by W.B Yeats in terms of politics, history and feminine nature and women's beauty in modern times. Last but not least, it was our intention to investigate the new meanings of Yeats's connotations of modernism, and to review and scrutinize the new meanings of Yeats's conceptions of nationalism. Then, our study is an attempt to answer the following research questions: (1) How have Yeats's notions of history and philosophy undergone an alteration or have come true in the postcolonial world in the global scenario? (2) What new meanings could be added to conception of the myth and symbolism used by Yeats in the present context?

### *Method and corpus*

For this study we have resorted to and applied the methods and principles of historical research, as well as a contextual and comparative approach. Since this study investigates the relevance of W.B. Yeats's concepts of history, philosophy and crisis in value system in modern world, it incorporates elements of 20th century social history as a pertinent theoretical tool for establishing a theoretical framework. The development and reason of chaos and crisis in communal human life is enquired, interrogated and analyzed in the light of the major critical theories related to history. Arguments are supported through textual evidence. Relevant statements and quotations are selected from the poems under scrutiny as well as from the most pertinent critical articles and books relating to the subject. The relevance of these quotations is then validated in the light of the critical studies. Research articles dealing with the political and literary discourse on the poetry of W.B Yeats have also been consulted. The study is exploratory

in purpose, following the holistic content-based mode of analysis. This means that the life of the notions of the poet have been brought under the microscope so that the varying patterns of his ideas may be traced.

\*\*\*\*\*

W.B Yeats' poetry is rich in myths, symbols and imagery. He believed that art and politics were intrinsically linked and used his writing to express his attitudes toward Irish politics as well as to educate his readers about Irish cultural history. His poems increasingly resembled political manifestos of the contemporary period. His symbolic poems also speak about the present social and political doctrine. Myth is used in Yeats's poetry to provide a rationale for social customs and observances by which people conducts their lives. His poem "The Second Coming" is closely related with the present brutality, anti-peace movement and genocide throughout the world. The "Rough Beast" in the poem "The Second Coming" – a horrific, violent animal, a ferocious creature – indicates the chaotic situation among the political, cultural, social and religious groups in the contemporary period.

Our dissertation is structured in: Introduction, six chapters, and Conclusions, followed by Illustrations and Bibliography.

In the Introduction: *Yeats and the Irish Question* we demonstrate that, for Yeats, the Irish question is not determined by a political document or by an unlimited dissemination of ideas based on a temporary victory or defeat. This question means deep research to understand where one stands and what direction to follow. His greatest challenge is to determine the level of cultural participation in which the Irish people find themselves, the space in which all the cultures that express them are reflected. This obeys the order; the transmitted culture has keys so that individuals can now identify themselves and thus can continue to progress towards a new society. In addition, the political tendency will grow if the cultural chain maintains its validity and relevance.

We show how Yeats actively participated in the revolutions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as one of his heroes. Yeats's work was the point of intellectual equilibrium since his writings, widely distributed among his compatriots, contributed to the spread of revolutionary ideals. He was always a patriot who felt his identity with his origins, and an active mediator of cultures, a poet who managed to refine all the forces that flowed in him and his own town. In

addition, his greatest contribution to Irish art was to remind his fellow citizens that there was not a single Irish subject, pure and exiled from abroad. This, like any other subject, consists of everything that crosses it. His great interest was precisely to identify all those influences and constituent particles, and how they could be tangled, however varied.

Chapter One: *The Symbolism in the Poetry of William Butler Yeats* elaborately discusses the meaning and concept of symbolism in literature in general and in poetry in particular. Some selected symbols like the gyre, the rose, the cone, the swan etc. are discussed in proper perspective that suits the need of the research. We show that Yeats's symbolic concept began to develop in the early 1890s as a result of his mysterious studies and his reading of William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Arthur Hallam, and Walter Pater.

Yeats was fully influenced by the French symbolist movement in the nineteenth century. He was a dreamer and an insightful person, fascinated by folk songs, legends and myths of Irish peasants. Yeats's poems were familiar with the background and legends of Ireland. Most of his poems deal with Old Ireland or use old legends.

We underline that Yeats, through his literary writings, proved that the best way to express the expansion of mind and mood must be the use of symbolism. He believed that emotional symbols excite emotions like all charming or unpleasant things, while intellectual symbols evoke thoughts or ideas that have merged with emotions. He believed that the symbols are the spirit of poetry and used to promote his expressions and thus create a special impact on the reader. Yeats put his words in a symbolic way to evoke strong feelings for his reader. We also considered the symbolism in Yeats's plays. Although his plays did not have much impact on critics, he spent many years writing plays, creating his own theater, and staging his own plays. There is a certain difficulty in responding to Yeats's plays, as they are vague, symbolic, distant and mysterious.

Finally, we compare between the two famous Byzantium poems of Yeats – “Byzantium” and “Sailing to Byzantium” – to discover their rich symbolism. The two poems have been seen as complementary, using rich images that refer to the historical city of Byzantium to explore such themes as death, aging and sublimation in artistic expression. The poems were seen as a spiritual and artistic renaissance, as well as symbolic representations of the creative poetic process. The journey was driven by one of the topics frequently discussed in his poems. The two poems must



be read and understood in their interdependence, because they symbolically affirm the same idea and theme, the artist's pursuit of immortal art.

Chapter Two: *Mythology in the Poetry of William Butler Yeats* discusses comprehensively the idea of myth in poetry and the ways and means employed by Yeats to use myth to convey his ideas effectively. We draw a complete portrait of the writer and underline how Yeats was a poet, playwright, painter, theologian, folklorist, and spiritual scholar. He believed that poetic cognition comes from spiritual belief, and that myth and folklore are important to the subject of the artist. Yeats realized that myth and legend could provide them with limited themes to develop his poetry. Yeats considered myth and legend as the basis of literature and considered himself legendary and historical.

We discuss in detail some of the poems written by Yeats on the basis of folklore, and touch upon some of the legendary characters that appear in his poems such as Cuchulain and Oisín. Yeats's involvement in the Irish political system grew from his interest in Irish myths and folklore. He re-wrote full folk tales in epic poems and plays and used parts of the stories in shorter poems. In addition, he presented poems on topics, images and themes of folklore. Yeats refined his poetry in the cultural sense of Irish culture. Even the poems that do not deal frankly with people of mythology retain strong features of original Irish culture.

Yeats was interested in Irish folklore and myth so that he may come in touch with the supernatural world. He loved the Irish folklore and, at the same time, he was afraid that Irish myths and legends would lose their impact in the present time because most people in Ireland do not have information about these myths and legends. Therefore, his poetry was replete with the supernatural and fairy tales to restore the Irish folklore. He used symbols and stories extracted from Celtic legend and Irish folklore and mythology. The main source of Yeats's writing was the storyline of life. He considered myth as an expository tool to link reading with the imaginary layer. As one of the greatest writers of Irish folklore during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Yeats was interested in the folk fairy tales as told by the peasants; besides, he became obsessed with the ancient Irish heroes.

Yeats looked to the Irish peasants as essential materials to establish a new consciousness of the Irish identity by transforming the stories of peasants into art, and by grasping the rhythms of the Anglo-Irish dialect. Yeats believed that the strife of peasants to own the land was like the

conflict of the nationalists and others who were fighting to get independence of Ireland. He believed that there is a close relationship between the Irish peasants through their traditions and folklore with the Irish history and the golden age. Yeats believed that the Irish peasants had the wisdom because of their language and folklore, as well as their simple rural life. He collected many supernatural stories from lots of storytellers, as well as from popular newspapers and magazines. Most of his poems and plays included stories and characters of Irish folklore to introduce the Irish literature, especially the Irish mythology, in the world literature. He believed that various Irish folklore collectors have a great merit, while from the point of view of others, they are making a big mistake. He asserted that they have made literature their main work rather than science. They conveyed to us the wisdom of the Irish peasantry rather than the primitive religion of the people. Yeats stimulates the feelings and emotions of his audience by using legends and myths from the Irish folklore to make them proud of their history, and at the same time, to make them conscious of the events in their country.

Chapter Three: *W. B. Yeats's Vision of History* deals with the significance of studying history in human life and the relation of history with literature, culture and politics. It contains a detailed analysis of the concept of history propounded by W.B. Yeats and shows that history, for Yeats, is a cyclical repetition. In *A Vision*, he hinted at his own view of history: a unique personal system of faith that involves a doctrine of reincarnation where all kinds of humanity have been set on a continuum and continuous cycle of motion. It is called a Great Wheel, with twenty-eight phases corresponding to the phases of the moon. His philosophy of history is revealed poems such as "The Second Coming", "Leda and Swan", "A Vision" and many other poems. He had a significant contribution to the glorification of Ireland's national history and legends.

We also refer to Yeats's pattern of history. He developed his historical pattern to make it less linear. Yeats's view of early history was very similar to the spiral and supposes the action of fate. Because he believed the modern world is aesthetically low, Yeats could not accept the idea of strict progress. His first view of history, as well as the views of many progressive thinkers, was its shocking end. He assumed that, in the future, evil will be written off and history will end. In short, Yeats suggested the salvation from the cycles and transcendence of all history. Yeats combined, in one theory, his sense of descent with the possibility of progress through faith in the spiral of the initial decline, but also in the final progress.

Yeats incorporated many legends in general and Greek legends in particular in many of his works to support his personal experience and to prove his vision of history. The Greek and Roman legends contain representative references to European traditions and have a great importance in the description process. Yeats used these classic legends increasingly in his works, for example the legend of Helen of Troy, in which he found similarities with Maud Gonne and his obsessive love for her.

We also demonstrate how Yeats developed insights about history and destiny and created his own Sufi methodology in *A Vision* – in which the gyre is one of the most important symbols. Yeats portrayed gyres as cones that succeed in forcing one's way to or through the other. These antibodies represent antibodies in the nature of each person, country or historical period. Each presence contains elements of both antibodies, classified as lunar and solar, or subjective and objective, or moral and aesthetic, and they become one or the other dominant over time and space. Through this system, the past can be rated and predicted in the future. Yeats depicted the gyres and the movement of everything in his poem "The Gyre", and predicted the destruction of time in everything through thermal movement. He explained that nothing in this world can last forever.

One of the topics discussed in this chapter is the presence of historical concepts in Yeats's plays. His early plays, in their social, historical and critical context, shed light on what Yeats was trying to do with plays that spoke of national and public social concerns. In addition, he combined his later works between national and historical themes because he believed that history was in essence a theater, and in a very literal sense, could be equal to dramatic performance. Yeats relied on Irish legends and historical themes in his plays. He participated with his contemporary writers to support the Irish theater and Irish national identity, especially by his plays "The Countess Cathleen" and "Cathleen ni Houlihan".

Chapter Four: *The Philosophical Notions of W. B. Yeats* critically analyzes the philosophical notions of W.B. Yeats and these ideas will be examined in the light of renowned philosophies of Plato, Hegel, Croce and the like. This chapter illustrates the important fact that Yeats's knowledge of ancient Greek culture was enhanced by several means: through his formal education, through his friends in England and Ireland, and finally through his own reading.

Because, in order to understand Yeats's poetry, one must be familiar with his readings and his use of philosophical, religious and magical texts that rely on ancient traditions. Many critics and scholars noted Yeats's interaction with the history of ideas in some detail, but mainly with the aim of exploring hints and ideas in his poetry and his plays, with limited attention to his views on philosophy as a subject in itself. These researchers were divided into two philosophical perspectives, the first that thought Yeats was idealist and the second that considered him a realist.

Yeats studied deeply the philosophical and cultural forms of Asia, especially Arabia, India, China and Japan, borrowed from them, and incorporated them into his new Celtic works. He wrote plays, articles, stories and poems with themes, ideas and oriental images interlaced with Celtic themes. Like the rest of the Renaissance, Yeats was familiar with the myth of Phoenician origins and sought to re-establish the chain of cultural communication through philosophy. In this chapter I will touch on the influence of Eastern philosophy on Yeats, especially Indian philosophy through Mohini Chatterjee, Rabindranat Tagore, and Purohit Swami. Through Yeats's poems "The Indian to His Love", "Anashuya and Vijaya" and "The Indian upon God", we can see the ancient Indian traditions that confirmed the Indian philosophers' influence in strengthening Yeats's interest in the ancient Indian traditions and in the intensification Yeats's inclination to romanticism as well as the big support to inspire him to write poems that bear an Indian impression.

We also analyze the influence of Arab philosophy on Yeats, reinforcing our words by explaining many lines from the famous poems of Yeats "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" and "Solomon to Sheba". Yeats's poem "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" is derived from a story in *The Arabian Nights*. In this poem, Yeats described himself and his wife George as Kusta Ben Luka and his wife in the poem. The second poem reflects Yeats's mood after his marriage with George. Solomon in the poem stands for Yeats himself and Sheba stands for his wife.

We reach the conclusion that it is not surprising that Yeats tries to convince the community to access Sufi knowledge using more practical materials. He uses different ways of theosophy to create his own national literary views. While he uses the metaphysical view of theosophy on the world to provide the infrastructure for some of the oldest poetry and drama, Yeats applies these methods in inquiry and argument to discover the metaphysical literary tradition, which includes both literary heroes of Irish culture and the tradition that Yeats himself designed. This theory

provides a methodology for Yeats to protest that both Shelley and Blake for example are part of the traditions of literature and philosophy that it comprises. This theory also provides the power that Yeats can call for inculcating moral and political inevitability in his national and literary critique.

Chapter Five: *The Modernism in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats* deals with the modern concepts of Yeats as compared to those of T. S. Eliot. Yeats and Eliot dominated the first half of the 20th century. There are two phases in Yeats's literary creation. The poems written during the first phase were inspired by Spenser, Shelley, Rossetti, and especially by late Victorian romance. The second phase includes his mystical and symbolic poems. Yeats, influenced by Blake, realized that the metaphysical approach was the only solution to modify the poetry to keep pace with the changes in time. Yeats mixes in his personal references to Blake, Shelley, and Spenser with reflections he concluded from philosophical studies. We also stress on the degree to which Yeats's poetry responded to both Romance and modernity. Romantic motivation was evident at the early stage, but with the development of his poetry, modernity began to interfere in his literary writings. With the change of the face of literary culture in the early twentieth century he captured some of the methods and works of contemporary poets who tried a new verse of the reflection of the disorder of the world.

We deal with the poetry of Yeats and Eliot, with reference to several themes, including age, time, humanity, love, psychology, end and crises. These themes, present in the poems of Yeats and Eliot, are already considered universal and influential to every reader and follower of these well-known poets. Yeats and Eliot benefited from all aspects of life associated with the essence of humanity. Yeats and Eliot wrote poetry which clearly defined the needs and desires of their time. They wrote about the social and political chaos, the confusion in human life and the urgent need for order. But the reasons they assumed were not different in the world's problems, which made it clear that they had described different issues with very different results.

This chapter includes a comparative study of "The Second Coming" of W. B. Yeats and "The Hollow Men" of T. S. Eliot, because we found that in order to achieve a better understanding of these two poets it is necessary to refer to certain facts and backgrounds that influenced them negatively or positively as well as to include similar historical elements that have an impact on their poetry. In order to understand their modernism, we must study the poems, plays and stories

written by them in terms of biological, literary and historical contexts. Yeats wrote with eagerness and eloquence about his personal disappointment, his obsession with Ireland, and the lack of confidence in traditional beliefs about art, religion, empire, social class, and sex. His work uniquely reflects the gradual transition from Victorian aesthetics to the modernism of Pound, Eliot and Joyce.

We also discussed Yeats's and Eliot's assessment of humanity. Yeats's vision of humanity represents both the victim and beneficiary of a series of inevitable historical cycles. He believed that the destructive pressures on civilization came from outside. Yeats continued to address this theme in many of his poems, while Eliot felt the impending end of the world was the result of the decay of civilization, as a direct consequence of humanity's rejection of Anglican faith. Since Eliot's vision was based on freedom of choice, humanity was found to bear ultimate responsibility for its salvation or destruction. Eliot differed from Yeats in his description of internal and spiritual destruction altogether.

Chapter Six: *Yeats and Irish National Identity* discusses how Yeats used his poetry as a tool for re-educating the Irish people about their heritage and as a strategy for developing Irish nationalism, with an insistence on the poet's role in the development the Irish cultural nationalism. We show how Yeats was interested in and had a great passion for Ireland and its identity. In an attempt to celebrate the history and nationality of the state, Yeats invented the ideal Irish character of the past to whom he added his time the contemporary martyrs, although he did so somewhat reluctantly because of certain issues in his poetry. His cultural nationalism is more than just a specific literary nationalism that reflects the national cultural aspects of his country. Yeats's concept of Ireland requires a literature that is closely related to his country. He advises the nationalists to leave political nationalism for Ireland's independence. Yeats adopted this important decision after the death of Charles Stewart Parnell, and he stressed the need for nationalists to shift from the political to the cultural in their thinking of nationalism.

In this chapter, Yeats's influential role in creating a national theater for Ireland is discussed. He wanted to build a different kind of a theater that reflects Irish national values against the background of the imperialist agreements in English theater. These ideas helped establish the National Theater Society. Yeats was the real architect of the revival of Irish literature. The discussion is supported by poems and plays written by Yeats with national characteristics such as

the poems “To Ireland in Coming Times” and “Easter 1916”, and “Cathleen Ni Houlihan”, a national play considered one of the most patriotic plays of Yeats written in collaboration with Lady Gregory.

This chapter also approaches Yeats from the point of view of postcolonial critique moving to unstable foundations. In general, Yeats’s work has long been a major topic of embarrassment and controversial debate to most critics. When it comes to his political beliefs and politics, it can not be denied that they were an integral part of his life, and played an important role in many of his works. It is a debate that has become more intense and complex. As an important national poet of Ireland, he has become a witness to the postcolonial developments in his country. The debate over the colonial or post-colonial status of Yeats is often an integral part of the broader issue of the postcolonial situation in Ireland.

Instead of a Conclusion: “Under bare Ben Bukben’s Head” rounds up the discussion and mentions the influence exerted by the pre-Raphaelites, romanticism, symbolism and English aestheticism on Yeats’s poetry, and the poet’s life-long attraction to the supernatural that includes beings and eternal orders, with oriental influences, of theosophy and especially of Irish mythology. It is an aspect that, combined with his search for an Irish authenticity, and his involvement in the struggle for freedom, reflects the great attachment he always felt for his land. At first, Yeats’s worldview had been influenced, apart from the literary currents, mainly by the ideas of Plato, Plotinus, Pater, Villiers de L’Isle Adam, the Kabbalah, the occult, theosophy, esoteric Buddhism and of Hindu philosophy. Subsequently, the dominant concept of his philosophy would be that of the totality of man and life. In his poems, he feels constantly a nostalgia for another world, a world where they coexist: the Irish – the landscape, the simple life of the peasants, the romantic past, the legends and the mythological heroes; the interior life of Yeats – his memories, his passion, his dreams, his search for fulfilment; and the mystical – an eternal, cyclical and hidden spirit that is in constant relation with all manifestations, worlds and times. We also comment on Yeats’s symbols, which add to the other numerous aspects that contribute to the originality of his work, such as the lonely impulse of pleasure, his great vital impulse, his sadness, his longing and his passion that remained with him throughout his life. Moreover, we underline his concept that the man of action is an artist, and the role of the artist is analogous to that of the saint because it gives us something precious, not like the saint,

renouncing the world, but immersing himself in it, even in its filth and horror, as well as his conviction that art can modify the world view of man, and with it, indirectly, influence his actions.